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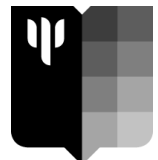
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2023. Vol. 19, no. 3

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# культурно-историческая ПСИХОЛОГИЯ

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# Contents

## THEORY AND METODOLOGY

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Thinking and Labour (Reading Vygotsky)<br><i>A.D. Maidansky</i> .....   | 4  |
| The Transvital Self: The Experience of Personology<br><i>V.A. Petrovsky</i> .....   | 13 |
| Scheme of Lev Vygotsky's Theory. Part 2<br><i>T.E. Sizikova, V.T. Kudryavtsev</i> .....   | 23 |
| The Concept of the Digital Play by S. Edwards in the Context<br>of the Cultural-Historical Paradigm<br><i>O.V. Salomatova</i> ..... | 30 |
| Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Child Development<br>by L.S. Vygotsky and G. Bowlby<br><i>S.V. Trushkina</i> .....            | 39 |

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Using Cultural-Historical Theory to Analyze Educational Inequality:<br>Potential, Barriers, Prospects<br><i>S.G. Kosaretsky</i> .....  | 47 |
| Problems of Creativity Development Methodology in Educational Practice<br>(About one of the Examples of Contradictions in the Modern System of Education)<br><i>D.B. Bogoyavlenskaya</i> ..... | 56 |
| Modern and Historical Parallels of Perception of Anomie in Armenian Society<br><i>S.R. Gevorgyan, N.R. Hakobyan, L.A. Kazanchian, A.G. Khachatryan</i> .....                                   | 64 |

## DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Coping Strategies in Emerging Adulthood Among Russian Students<br><i>M.V. Klementyeva, V.I. Ivanova</i> .....  | 72 |
| Profiles of Family Resilience and Vitality of Representatives<br>of Russian and Belarusian Families<br><i>M.A. Odintsova, D.V. Lubovsky, V.I. Borodkova, N.V. Kozyreva, O.N. Vepicheva</i> ..... | 81 |
| Psychology of Laughter in a Structural-Dialectical Approach<br><i>N.E. Veraksa, L.F. Bayanova, T.V. Artemyeva</i> .....  | 93 |

## MEMORABLE DATES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| To the 75th Anniversary of V.V. Rubtsov ..... | 102 |
| To the 85th Anniversary of M. Cole .....      | 106 |

# Содержание

## ТЕОРИЯ И МЕТОДОЛОГИЯ

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Мышление и труд (читая Выготского)<br><i>А.Д. Майданский</i> .....  | 4  |
| Трансвита́льное Я: опыт персонологии<br><i>В.А. Петровский</i> .....  | 13 |
| Схема теории Л.С. Выготского. Часть 2<br><i>Т.Э. Сизикова, В.Т. Кудрявцев</i> .....   | 23 |
| Концепция цифровой игры С. Эдвардс в контексте<br>культурно-исторической парадигмы<br><i>О.В. Саломатова</i> .....                  | 30 |
| Сравнительный анализ подходов Л.С. Выготского и Дж. Боулби<br>к развитию ребенка на первом году жизни<br><i>С.В. Трушкина</i> ..... | 39 |

## ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Использование культурно-исторической теории для анализа<br>образовательного неравенства: потенциал, барьеры, перспективы<br><i>С.Г. Косарецкий</i> .....                    | 47 |
| Проблемы методологии развития творчества в практике образования<br>(Об одном из примеров противоречий в современной системе образования)<br><i>Д.Б. Богоявленская</i> ..... | 56 |
| Современные и исторические параллели восприятия аномии<br>в армянском обществе<br><i>С.Р. Геворкян, Н.Р. Акопян, Л.А. Казанчян, А.Г. Хачатрян</i> .....                     | 64 |

## ПСИХОЛОГИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Копинг-стратегии в период формирующейся взрослости<br>у российских студентов<br><i>М.В. Клементьева, В.И. Иванова</i> .....   | 72 |
| Профили семейной жизнеспособности и жизнестойкость представителей<br>российских и белорусских семей<br><i>М.А. Одинцова, Д.В. Лубовский, В.И. Бородкова, Н.В. Козырева, О.Н. Веричева</i> ..... | 81 |
| Психология смеха в структурно-диалектическом подходе<br><i>Н.Е. Веракса, Л.Ф. Баянова, Т.В. Артемьева</i> .....   | 93 |

## ПАМЯТНЫЕ ДАТЫ

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| К 75-летию В.В. Рубцова ..... | 102 |
| К 85-летию М. Коула .....     | 106 |

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**THEORY AND METODOLOGY**  
**ТЕОРИЯ И МЕТОДОЛОГИЯ**

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## Thinking and Labour (Reading Vygotsky)

**Andrey D. Maidansky**

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Lev Vygotsky connected the development of “higher forms of thinking” with labour, and claimed that this connection is “central and basic”, allowing to unfold the peculiarities of children’s thinking and the new in adolescent’s mind. Meanwhile, the concept of labour in Vygotsky’s works has not been investigated so far. This article traces the “genetic nodes that connect together the child’s thinking and practical activity” (Vygotsky), starting with “practical intelligence” and ending with labour. Thus, the development of the child’s psyche appears as its ingrowing into the process of social labour. According to Vygotsky, the speech of adults acts as an “ideal form” in dialogue with which the child’s speech develops; the same ideal form is constituted by labour. The child’s practical activity develops towards labour through the stages of playing, drawing, modelling and constructing. The article touches upon the problem of mastering affects by means of concepts, discusses the connection between the conceptual and real “fields” in human consciousness, and draws a parallel between the development of consciousness and labour.

**Keywords:** practical intelligence, practical activity, polytechnic labour, children’s play, egocentric speech, affects, conceptual field, labour field.

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## Мышление и труд (читая Выготского)

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Развитие «высших форм мышления» Л.С. Выготский связывал с трудом и утверждал, что эта связь — «центральная и основная», позволяющая раскрыть особенности детского мышления и новое в мышлении подростка. Меж тем понятие труда в работах Выготского до сих пор не исследовалось. В настоящей статье прослеживаются «генетические узлы, соединяющие воедино мышление и практическую деятельность ребенка» (Выготский), начиная с «практического интеллекта» и заканчивая трудом. Тем самым развитие детской психики предстает как вращивание ее в процесс общественного труда. По Выготскому, речь взрослых выступает как «идеальная форма», в диалоге с которой развивается речь ребенка; такую же идеальную форму образует и труд взрослых. Практическая деятельность ребенка развивается навстречу труду по ступеням игры, рисования, лепки и конструирования. В статье затрагивается проблема овладения аффектами при помощи понятий, обсуждается связь смыслового и реального «полей» в человеческом сознании, проводится параллель между развитием сознания и труда.

**Ключевые слова:** практический интеллект, практическая деятельность, политехнический труд, детская игра, эгоцентрическая речь, аффекты, смысловое поле, трудовое поле.

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Labour – speech – thinking... In labour all higher, specifically human, functions [work].

*Lev Vygotsky. Notebooks*  
(not earlier than 1933)

## Introduction

The concept of labour in L.S. Vygotsky's theory has not yet become the subject of a special study. The key article devoted to this topic, "On the Connection between Labour Activity and Intellectual Development of the Child", has been almost ignored<sup>1</sup>. It was not included in the Collected Works of Vygotsky. The other works in which Vygotsky discusses the problem of connection between thinking and labour are somewhere on the far periphery of cultural-historical psychology.

Relying on Aleksei N. Leontiev's memories and assessments, Vassily Davydov wrote about the importance of the concept of labour in "the history of emergence and development of Vygotsky's psychological school". Vygotsky's keen interest in the concept of labour in other scholar's works was noted<sup>2</sup>. In his printed works and notebooks one can repeatedly find comparisons of instruments of labour with signs, the process of labour with practical intelligence and children's play. It is more difficult to understand how the concept of labour works in Vygotsky's psychological and pedagogical research. What does it provide for understanding the history of the development of higher psychological functions?

We will trace how Vygotsky reveals the psychological connection between thinking and labour, then how the "nodes" of thinking and practical activity are tied at different age stages, and finally we will consider the process of a child's cultural development as the interiorisation of labour.

### I. Man on the "path to freedom"

Vygotsky made his first approach to the problem of the connection between thinking and labour in *Pedagogical Psychology*. The difference of human labour activity from "animal labour" is seen here in its reliance on

"collective social experience" accumulated throughout world history. Thinking, on the other hand, is a cut off and suppressed "speech-motor reaction" – a peculiar social reflex, closed in other people's experience, not in my personal one [see: 8, p. 41].

The common basis of both labour and thinking is "historical experience, social heredity", which animals do not have. In the same paragraph, the word "culture" is also used, which would later supplant the expression "social experience" in Vygotsky's works.

There is no analysis here yet of the specific forms of connection between thinking and labour, but the system of coordinates has already been outlined: "labour – speech – thinking". It will be inherited by cultural-historical theory. By the time the book saw the light of day, Vygotsky had come to the conclusion that "reaction" and "reflex" were not concepts that could advance the study of social-historical processes and higher psychological functions. His fascination with reactology, however, did not prevent him from giving in Chapter X a brilliant historical-materialist analysis of the forms of labour education corresponding to the three types of social production: manual, machine and polytechnic labour<sup>3</sup>.

Polytechnic education aims to synthesise scientific-theoretical thinking with labour. Vygotsky would return to this topic – now already from the standpoint of cultural-historical psychology – five years later in his lecture "Practical Activity and Thinking in Child Development in Respect of the Problem of Polytechnism" at the First (and last) Congress of the All-Union Society of Psychotechnics and Applied Psychophysiology. The thought from the notebooks, which appears in the epigraph of this article, is unfolded here: "Labour was the cradle of all higher psychological functions, of all higher forms of behaviour specific to man... Labour necessarily implies mastery of the processes of a person's own behaviour" [11, p. 38]<sup>4</sup>.

Vygotsky's principle of the development of the human mind, as it is known, states that every psychological

<sup>1</sup> Although Aleksei A. Leontiev called it "the most important work" and quoted one line [see 16, p. 99].

<sup>2</sup> "Analysing the development of psychological science, L.S. Vygotsky does not miss a single case where it turns to studying labour" [20, p. 92].

<sup>3</sup> For details, see the work of Andrey Maidansky [19].

<sup>4</sup> The publication is not mentioned in the available bibliographies of Vygotsky. The inventory of the archive lists a manuscript (4 p.) and a later copy, but neither could be found.

function develops in the direction of its “comprehension” (*osmyslivanie*) and conscious mastery of it. From acting spontaneously, automatically, impulsively, it turns into “voluntary” (*proizvol'naya*, i.e. controlled by the will, *volya*). This is how all higher functions are formed.

Vygotsky calls this integral psychological process “intellectualisation”. Perception, memory, speech and all other “natural” functions are being drawn one after another into the work of *thinking*, obeying its requirements and conforming to its categorical structures. The core of the development of the human mind is the formation of concepts and their increasing dominance in the life of the individual.

A similar process of intellectualisation, it should be noted, occurs with *labour*, both in the history of mankind and in the development of the individual (provided that its development is carried out freely enough). Polytechnic education is intended to develop in the child *scientifically considered* labour skills, and to turn the labour itself into deliberate process, standing in each of its links under the conscious control of a thinking subject, a human being.

Such education on a large scale, however, is possible only under the condition of “complete polytechnicisation of labour”: when, owing to the development of techniques and technologies, physical labour will become “close to zero and the importance of intellectual labour will increase to a tremendous extent”; when the worker will turn from a rickshaw puller into a carriage driver. Even America, let alone Russia, is still a long way off from this, Vygotsky realistically stipulates. “Polytechnism is a truth for some future day” [8, p. 207].

By that day, the scientific principles and technology for the liberation of our psyche must be developed. Vygotsky shares this dream already in the 1924 paper that opened the way for him to big science.

“To master the psyche as we master electricity is the tantalising prospect of psychology... It does not so much endeavour to understand the human psyche as to master it; enough psychologists have interpreted the soul, we must change and reorganise it” [12]<sup>5</sup>.

Vygotsky's ideal is a versatile developed and “transparent” personality who controls and regulates the work of its “nerves and psyche”. A personality of this type Vygotsky sometimes calls a “superhuman”.

In the notebooks of the last years of his life, Vygotsky begins to develop a plan for a “height” or “acmeist” psychology. It will have to find out how “consciousness changes life” [1, p. 414]. Related to this was his inter-

est in psychotechnics, which was precisely aimed at the practical transformation of “life” (and primarily labour processes) by means of scientific psychology. But Vygotsky posed a bolder and broader problem, looking beyond the horizon of the present. To master the life of the soul and to control the inner world in the same way as we control the forces of external nature — he would not agree to anything less.

The keys to the cherished goal are in the concepts of intellect. In this point Vygotsky follows “Spinoza's star”. There are essentially only two possible life strategies — life by affect and life by concept. The behaviour of animals and often humans is driven by “blind desires” (primary affect, according to Spinoza). Can human beings tame this powerful element of life? How can we free ourselves from the “slavery of affects”? Vygotsky intended to give an answer to this question in his last book, *The Doctrine of Emotions*, but only managed to cover the formulation of the problem in Descartes and in the old psychology, which had split into two Cartesian halves — “explanatory” and “descriptive” psychology.

For a long time it was supposed that Vygotsky had no satisfactory solution. Recently published notebooks have revealed a clue: *the interrelationship of affects must be modified by means of concepts*. The rational awareness of an affect, illuminated by the rays of a concept, puts it in a different relation to other affects and changes its function in human behaviour. New affects arise, and the former ones are “isolated from the realm of instincts and transferred to a completely new plane” [4, p. 315]. This plane is called the “meaningful field”, where concepts<sup>6</sup>, not instincts, reign.

“In man as a *res cogitans*<sup>7</sup>, develops a *new relation to the situation* in comparison with the animal. The novelty is that thinking (the meaningful field) *introduces a new affect*... Thinking preserves but reorganizes the affects, their *ordo et connexio*...<sup>8</sup> Cf. with a child, we change the *Energiequelle*<sup>9</sup> so that he will agree to have a tooth pulled out: candy [as a reward], or you will die; we elicit a stronger affect... The affect in the concept becomes active...<sup>10</sup> Recognised cowardice determines our attitude to it (shame) [1, p. 471–472].

Man cultivates the natural affects of body and soul, just as he tames wild animals, as he transforms a forest into a garden or a grove by his *labour*. The natural wilds of passions are replaced by the “meaningful fields” of culture.

Theatre clearly shows how this work of the soul on itself is carried out. On the theatre stage, in the meaningful field of the play, affects are arranged in an order and

<sup>5</sup> The text is unpublished, quoted from a copy by Ekaterina Zavershneva, taken from Vygotsky's home archive.

<sup>6</sup> “The meaningful field ... for us are concepts, generalisations” [1, p. 467]. The topic is revealed in the excellent work of Zavershneva [14].

<sup>7</sup> “Thinking thing”, the definition of the human mind in Descartes and Spinoza.

<sup>8</sup> “Order and connection”, an expression from Spinoza's *Ethics*.

<sup>9</sup> “Source of energy”. Earlier, comparing the motivation of oral and written speech, Vygotsky referred to Kurt Levin's notion of *Energiequelle* [see: 1, p. 356].

<sup>10</sup> According to Spinoza, active affect increases our “power of acting” (*agendi potentia*), while passive affect (*passio*) decreases it.



connection dictated by thought, obeying the *concepts* of the playwright, director, and actor.

Thus, the value of Stanislavsky's system for Vygotsky is that it opens "the path to mastery of emotions, and, consequently, the path of voluntary arousal and artificial creation of new emotions..., creating a complex system of representations, concepts, and images of which emotion is a part" [2, p. 209–210].

The work of thought clears emotion of all unnecessary things, generalises and gives it an objective character – then the emotion becomes subject to the human will, "voluntary". This point is confirmed by modern psychophysiological studies of emotions, Vygotsky concludes. "To study the order and connection of affects is the principal task of scientific psychology" [2, p. 211].

Labour requires subordinating one's affective-emotional reactions and psychological functions to the *logic of the matter*. It is impossible to work properly – as well as to think – when you are at the mercy of "blind desires" and do not know how to curb them, or if you are unable to concentrate on the *subject* of your labour. "Ribot points out the psychological affinity between labour and voluntary attention". As Ribot himself says, "before the advent of civilisation, voluntary attention did not exist or appeared for a moment only, like a fleeting flash of lightning. Labour constitutes the most sharply concrete form of attention" [9, p. 369]<sup>11</sup>.

In the battle against the pernicious affects – the "passions of the soul," as Descartes called them – labour is always at one with thinking, on the side of the concept. In this perspective, thinking is nothing but mental *labour*.

Height psychology is called upon to comprehend the development of the personality as a process of its liberation from the slavery of affects, the subjugation of the natural element of mental life by the labour of the mind. Spinoza's lesson: human freedom is the power of the concept over affect, the scientific understanding and reorganisation of our passions.

"Freedom: the affect in the concept... *The grandiose picture of personality development: the path to freedom*" [1, p. 256]. "*The main thing in thinking is freedom: Ich kann was ich will*"<sup>12</sup>. From there it is transferred to action. But freedom is born in thought... *Concepts* – a new relationship + a liberation... This is the key to everything: the transfer (the action) in the meaningful field. Its freedom, its rationality" [1, p. 465–466].

Unfortunately, after Vygotsky's death, this "grandiose picture" fell out of the "meaningful field" of cultural-historical psychology, as well as his studies of specific forms of the connection between thinking and labour, which will be discussed further on.

## II. "The line of the child's practical activity development"

As we know, Vygotsky's theory tells us about the development of higher psychological functions. It remains to understand what the *purpose* of this development is, in order to turn it into the ultimate goal of a child's upbringing.

"The most harmful legacy of the old school" is the transfer of the goals of education "somewhere far away", orienting the educational practice towards the "abstract ideal of a perfect personality", Vygotsky asserts. The old school "passed by labour and, depending on this, organised life here, nearby, in the most ugly and ineffective way – overlooking those daily activities, that constant labour which filled, eventually, all of a person's time and took up all of his energies" [8, p. 313].

These sharp lines do not prevent modern Vygotsky scholars from "passing by labour". Some even claim that "Vygotsky devoted very little effort to the study of labour activity" [24, p. 44], or – in continuous cursive: "*There is no attempt to analyse the social labour process at all in Vygotsky*" [23, p. 28]. (No printable comments.)

In the habitual discourse on the development of a child's personality and its "higher mental functions", the main vector and ultimate goal of the development is often overlooked. For Marxist Vygotsky, this is the *formation of labour skills* – the ability to work skilfully, diligently and with *love* for labour.

The *Pedology of Adolescence* rejects a system of education in which "the child grows and develops without knowing labour". With proper upbringing, "labour is the natural atmosphere of life from the earliest years" and the adolescent's choice of profession is "the organic conclusion of a long process of development... Education should prepare the child for this step long before this step can take place" [9, p. 463–464]. He should be prepared for the future labour life to the extent that the processes of organic maturation allow it.

"But this is not enough", Vygotsky adds. "It is necessary to develop and create inclinations to a certain profession, love for labour" [9, p. 464]. *Amor labouris* is the active "affect in the concept" that determines the development of a mature, free human personality throughout its life path.

Hymns to labour in Soviet times were often heard. The problem is to clarify theoretically and, if possible, experimentally the role of labour in the development of children's thinking.

As the starting point of his research, Vygotsky takes *practical intelligence* – the instrumental activity of animals in solving special kinds of tasks that require find-

<sup>11</sup> The editors of Vygotsky's *Collected Works* removed the quotation marks and struck out "a fleeting flash of lightning", as well as much else that was not to their taste.

<sup>12</sup> I can (do) what I want. Sarah Slioberg's (Kurt Lewin's collaborator) words about the "unreal" world of play, fantasy.

ing roundabout ways to the goal. For this purpose, the scheme of activity must take into account the structure of the observed situation, the interrelationship of things within the “visible field” (the pioneer of practical intelligence research, Wolfgang Köhler, considered this a hallmark of intelligent behaviour).

Practical intelligence is a natural radical common to thinking and labour: both of them *emerged* from the instrumental activity of higher animals.

It is well known what great, paramount importance Vygotsky attached to the study of practical intelligence. It is the “genetically” primary – and at that experimentally fixed – form of connection between “natural thinking” and practical activity, equally in phylo- and ontogenesis.

Further Vygotsky traces “how genetic nodes connecting thinking and practical activity of the child are tied at each given age stage” [7, p. 589]. The concept of the child’s practical activity covers, along with child labour, also physical games, drawing and construction<sup>13</sup>, and any other activity in the surrounding world, in the course of which the *mind is processed by things through the work of the hands*.

“Piaget argues that things do not process the mind of the child. But we have seen that in real situation... things really do process his mind. By the word ‘things’, we mean the reality he encounters in the course of his practice, not the reality passively reflected in the child’s perception and learnt by him from an abstract point of view” [6, p. 51].

When Vygotsky begins his study of the age-specific forms of the connection between thinking and practical activity, he first summarises what his predecessors and contemporaries have achieved. He emphasises “two attempts that come from the psychological laboratory”. The first of these two theories, psychotechnics, solved the problem “apart from the notion of development and almost exclusively in a differential-psychological perspective”. This deficiency, Vygotsky continues, has recently been attempted to be remedied by “genetic and child psychology”. Its merit, along with the introduction of the principle of development into the theory, Vygotsky sees in the desire to “strictly separate the native, natural root functions of practical intelligence from those further changes of these functions and superstructures over them, which they acquire, becoming labour activity in the proper sense of the word” [7, p. 593].

Vygotsky repeatedly referred to Piaget’s words: “The child never really comes into real contact with things, for he does not labour” [21, p. 37]<sup>14</sup>. In this “thought thrown by Piaget in passing” Vygotsky finds “the key to understanding all the peculiarities of children’s thinking”! The development of thinking is made *towards labour* and the further it goes, the more clearly it is determined by social and labour needs and tasks.

“This connection of the development of higher forms of thinking (and in particular thinking in concepts) with labour seems to be central and basic, capable of revealing the peculiarities of children’s thinking and the new that appears in the thinking of the adolescent” [9, p. 334].

Rightly linking the qualitative difference between the thinking of a child and an adult with labour, Piaget does not demonstrate how “the synthesis between the intellectual development of a child, on the one hand, and the development of his labour activity, on the other hand, arises” [7, p. 593]. For Vygotsky, this is the heart of the matter. It is necessary to trace how practical “processing of the mind by things” develops into labour. Taking the form of labour, practical activity reaches the highest point of development, its “acme”.

At the end of the article there is a sketch of “the scheme of intellectual development of the child in connection with his practical activity at the most important ages” [7, p. 595].

1. As early as 6 months of age, the child tries to influence one object with the help of another; a few months later this activity develops into “the primary, most primitive use of tools,” i.e. into practical intelligence. As in Köhler’s chimpanzees, the children’s instrumental activity is at first in no way connected with speech. Speech activity at this age expresses *pure emotion*. It is not so much communication, Vygotsky explains, as “emotional contamination<sup>15</sup>, a transfer of affect” [5, p. 302].

2. In the next phase, between one and three years of age, the development of practical activity proceeds in the direction of its “syncretic fusion” with verbal thinking. From the first days of life, the child’s activity is organised through other people, with complete dependence on their activity, and accompanied by human speech. Accordingly, the child himself simultaneously acts and speaks aloud, forming a “fusion of speech and action”.

3. At the age of three, the child moves from “social speech” addressed to people around him to egocentric

<sup>13</sup> Drawing, taken from its physical side, too (experiments with a pencil, described in Chapter Two of *Thinking and Speech*). Construction, understood as “the algebra of things” (I.G. Rozanov): it is not the thing that is created, but the “thing formula” of *action* – “things teach how to assemble them” [1, p. 535].

<sup>14</sup> In these pages of the book it is said that the child’s thinking runs on a “verbal plane” and is as “impervious to experience” as the thinking of the savage. It is only in games, when they have to act with their hands, that children do encounter the resistance of things; despite this, the child’s mind and the savage’s mind do not go further than “beliefs” (*croiances*).

<sup>15</sup> In the printed text: “emotional *expression*”. I venture to assume that this is a stenographic error or an editorial edit. In the first chapter of *Thinking and Speech* and in his *Notebooks*, Vygotsky contrasts *communication*, on the basis of understanding via concepts, with *contamination* by affects (in animals, toddlers, and “patient D.”). The Russian words “expression” (*vyrazhenie*) and “contamination” (*zarazhenie*) are of the same root and similar in sound, so they can easily be confused.

speech. A fragmentary monologue spoken for oneself serves as a transitional stage to inner speech. Vygotsky was mostly interested in the “planning function” of egocentric speech in the implementation of practical activities of the child. It was necessary to catch experimentally the moment of transformation of the speech “mould”, the reflection of the components of activity, into a means of overcoming the difficulties that the child encounters in his practical actions<sup>16</sup>.

As a consequence, a new — verbal — plan for building and adjusting the scheme of activity is formed. Speech becomes a means and form of thought, “thinking aloud”. At this moment, the relationship between thinking and practical activity is reversed: now, verbal thought precedes action, anticipates and directs it. The word frees thought from the “slavery of the visual field”<sup>17</sup> and opens up the possibility of planning actions, one’s own and others’.

4. At the age of 6–10 years internal speech is formed and its separation from external activity begins. Finally, at the transitional age, verbal thinking develops into conceptual, categorical thinking, forming a relatively autonomous sphere of the “inner life” of the personality. In adolescents we find already “thinking in concepts, completely detached from concrete actions” [9, p. 395].

The isolation of thinking activity from practical activity is a condition sine qua non of the labour process. Human labour requires constructing a scheme of planned action “in mind” by means of words, numbers and other signs, before real “contact with things” takes place.

The first experience of action planning is acquired by the child in *play*. From play — through the “transitional forms” of drawing, modelling and constructing — the thread stretches to *labour*. All these are stages in the process of development of planned activity and practical processing of the mind by things (through processing things with hands). “From the viewpoint of the imaginary situation constructing lies between play and labour. Cf. the cluster of creative activities from one spring: play, drawing, modelling, constructing, and labour” [1, p. 534]<sup>18</sup>.

The genetic connection between play and labour is unfolded in *The Pedology of School Age*.

“Play and labour can be regarded as psychological antitheses. Play is the realm of instinct, labour is the realm of will” [10, p. 167]. But already in children’s play the instinctive form is overcome by the “game rule”. Instinctive activity turns into cultural, volitional. “This is a manifestation of the true dialectic of play. Genetically, in the game the mechanisms of labour mature” [10, p. 168].

In the practical intellect of an infant, the real field coincided with the meaningful field. In play, the meaningful field is first separated from the real one and begins to dominate over it, even if only in an “imaginary situ-

ation”. Labour “realises the meaningful in the visible” [1, p. 525]: ideal goals, intentions and meanings acquire flesh, taking on a material form.

In December 1933, Vygotsky drew a table of two columns — “Play” and “Labour” [1, p. 535]. The difference is that play obeys rules, labour obeys laws. In affective terms: if play is *Handlung* (action) without embodiment, pleasure is brought here by the process itself (*Funktion-slust*), then in labour “*Handlung*, embodiment of the intention = *Vorlust*”. For Karl Bühler, *Vorlust* (anticipatory pleasure) is the highest form of emotional experience: the shift of pleasure to the beginning of the process of activity, to the planning phase. The table concludes with the definition of labour as “play sui generis”.

In this light, the whole development of the child’s psyche appears as its ingrowing into labour activity: the formation of the concepts required for labour, mental and speech abilities, willpower, etc., on the one hand, plus the elaboration of cultural affects such as love of labour, respect for working people and the fruits of their labours, diligence, selflessness, etc., on the other.

### III. The interiorisation of labour

We have found that the concept of labour is the cornerstone of cultural-historical psychology. It is understandable why this stone is despised by those who value Vygotsky as a forerunner of semiotics, consider him a pretended Marxist, etc. It is more difficult to understand why Vygotsky’s *students*, who shared his attitude to labour and for half a century created the “psychological theory of activity”, did not wish to continue the research begun by their teacher into “the genetic nodes that connect together the child’s thinking and practical activity”. I believe, the reason lies in the fact that the axial connection “labour — speech — thinking” has become understood in a fundamentally different way, especially with regard to the function of speech and words in the child’s activity.

Let us open the main work of A.N. Leontiev *Problems of the Development of Mind* and find in it the paragraph “The specific features of the formation of mental actions” [18, p. 379]. At the very beginning Vygotsky’s name sounds here in connection with the concept of interiorisation, and that is all. Not a word about Vygotsky’s research on the formation of concepts, on the connection between thought and practical activity through speech, on the planning function of children’s speech — although Leontiev himself, together with Vygotsky, supervised Rosa Levina’s experiments, which clarified this function in the process of formation of “mental” and practical actions.

<sup>16</sup> Experiments have shown that the egocentric speech rate almost doubles when difficulties arise [see: 15].

<sup>17</sup> Köhler’s expression, picked up by Vygotsky.

<sup>18</sup> Note made during G.A. Kvasnety’s report to the Toy Council.

In the chapter “Speech” written by Leontiev for the psychology textbook [22, pp. 262–288], egocentric speech is not mentioned even in the section “Development of Speech in Children”. He edited and completed this text for ten years. In 1938–1948 the textbook was published in three editions, the volume of the chapter grew by one third, but there was no space for that form of speech, which Vygotsky considered “the first turning and decisive stage for the entire future fate of the development of the child’s thinking” [3, p. 11].

The state of affairs does not change in Leontiev’s lectures on speech in the General Psychology course at Moscow State University (1973–1975). Vygotsky is a frequent guest and interlocutor here, but egocentric speech remains a topic non grata.

Vygotsky was not invited to lectures on emotions and affects. Leontiev defines affects as “labels sticking to the situation”, and emotions are certain internal “orientating signals” [17, p. 466, 474]. As a consequence, the whole problematics of Vygotsky’s “height psychology” with its “affect – concept” opposition and the open “path to freedom” falls out of sight. It is absurd, indeed, to connect human freedom with the mastery of sticky labels or to visit the theatre for the sake of fresh orienting signals...

A.N. Leontiev and activity psychology in general made the appreciable progress in comparison with Vygotsky in the study of orienting activity and processes of interiorisation of cultural norms and forms of human activity, but even here emotions were hardly taken into account. Vygotsky sought to “move emotions from the backyard of the human mind to the foreground” and “to introduce them into the structure of all other mental processes” [4, p. 324]. This was the idea of his last, unfinished book.

Let us return once more to the question: what place does labour occupy in the psychological development of the child? The “natural atmosphere of labour” in which a child should grow up, of course, presupposes both his feasible, at first purely playful, participation in labour activity, then regular school labour<sup>19</sup>, but it should not be reduced to this, especially in early childhood.

The key to the answer to the question posed will be the parallel between the concepts of consciousness and labour<sup>20</sup>.

Vygotsky’s work “Infancy” paints a picture of a consciousness that is completely devoid of internal activity; it is nothing but a stream of affects in the processes of sleep and feeding. In terms of orienting activity, the infant psyche is inferior even to a newborn insect. But it forms a part of social consciousness and is thus initially social – a “consciousness of mental community” with

the mother and other people whose actions mediate all contacts of the infant with things. This primary phase of human mental development Vygotsky, following German psychologists, calls “consciousness of ‘primeval we’ (*Ur-wir*)” [5, p. 305].

The same is true of human labour. The infant is surrounded at every moment of its life by labouring people and objects created by labour. His personal life activity in every phase is mediated by the processes and products of the labour activity of others. He is immersed in the atmosphere of labour, within which (as its ideal – or, according to Vygotsky, “meaningful” – moment) our consciousness also exists.

The meaningful field of consciousness forms the inner layer of the *labour field*, a kind of endothelium of labour. The consciousness of “primeval we” is the first, most vague reflection of the material-practical ties between people – not so much an awareness as an affective “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) of the labour community of humanity (in the sense in which Vygotsky speaks of *perezhivanie* as a “unit of consciousness”).

Consciousness and labour are social processes. If consciousness is collective mind, then labour is collective practice – *collaboration* (through sign systems, technical devices and social institutions).

Vygotsky includes the category of collaboration in the final formulation of the general law of cultural development: all higher functions “arise initially as forms of *collaborative activity*, and only later they are transferred by the child into the sphere of his psychological forms of activity” [6, p. 282; italics mine]. The concept of collaboration, joint activity of people, we find in the definition of the “zone of proximal development” and in the foundation of Vygotsky’s special pedagogy with its principle of “overcoming a defect” through collaboration.

(One can only wonder at the amaurosis of those experts who criticise Vygotsky for his “non-activity” approach. Apparently, “practical activity”, labour and “collaborative activity” do not count as a full-fledged notion of activity).

The infant is included in the processes of labour, as well as in the processes of social consciousness, at first only receptively, through the simplest affects. Its vital activity is only the potency of labour, or, to put it in Hegelian terms, labour “in itself”. All the subsequent cultural development of the child is nothing else but the *ingrowing of his soul into social production*, i.e. into the process of labour en gros; as well as vice versa – the *interiorisation of labour*, the formation of the child’s abilities for certain types of labour activity.

The ingrowth of a new person into the “ensemble of social relations” between working people is accom-

<sup>19</sup> A year before his death, Vygotsky was thinking about a book on educational labour. “The general idea – *school labour as a whole* (not mathematics, Russian) is a *new developmental type of activity*” [1, p. 417–418].

<sup>20</sup> For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that there is no such parallel in Vygotsky’s works, and the author of these lines does not seek, as is often the case, to pass off his reflections as Vygotsky’s views. This is an attempt to continue and develop his theory.

plished not only through “child labour” as such, but also through the meeting of practical thinking with speech, and through the subsequent separation of word and action, through the intellectualisation of psychological functions and the subordination of individual affects to concepts in which the schemes of activity and norms of social life are historically deposited.

According to Vygotsky, the *speech* of adults acts as an “ideal form” for the child, the source of his speech development. The *labour* of adults performs the same role of the

ideal form: the child’s practical activity is carried out in interaction with it and orientated on it in its development.

Observing how the “genetic nodes” of deed, word and thought are tied, how concepts are formed and mastered by affects, Vygotsky constantly kept in mind “labour as a central factor in all intellectual development” [9, p. 34]. This is the “acmeist” view in cultural-historical psychology — a view from the height of the goal to which the development of the human mind is subordinated and towards which it is directed.

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# The Transvital Self: The Experience of Personology

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The paper substantiates the concept of a “transvital Self”, a particular form of an individual’s existence beyond the apparent forms of vital function and the processes of reproducing self as a psychophysical integrity. The author uses the term “transvitality” (A. Akopyan’s “transvital meanings”) to more generally address this concept as a holistic denotation for a hypothetical category of psychological phenomena, including “transvital meanings”. Based on his own experimental studies and elements of psychological counseling, the author considers three forms of transvital Self: supra-vital Self (actively non-adaptive, authentic-subjective), meta-vital Self (ideally continued, reflected-subjective), and cross-vital Self (coessential, pan-existential).

**Keywords:** self, human agency, subjectivity, otherness, supra-adaptability, archetypes, “eternity”.

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## Трансвитальное Я: опыт персонологии

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В статье обосновывается идея существования «трансвитального Я» — особой формы бытия индивида за пределами наличных форм его жизнедеятельности, процессов воспроизводства себя как психофизической целостности. Отталкиваясь от термина «трансвитальность» в словосочетании «трансвитальные смыслы» (А.С. Акоюн), автор рассматривает «трансвитальность» в более общем плане, как единое обозначение для гипотетического класса психологических феноменов, включающего в себя «трансвитальные смыслы», но в целом к ним не сводимых. На материале культуры и собственных экспериментальных исследований, а также фрагментов психологического консультирования рассматриваются три формы трансвитального Я: *над*-витальное Я (активно-неадаптивное, аутентично-субъектное), *мета*-витальное Я (идеально продолженное, отраженно-субъектное), *кросс*-витальное Я (единосущное, всебытийное).

**Ключевые слова:** Я, субъектность, бытие в другом, над-адаптивность, архетип, трансвитальность, «вечность».

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### Introduction

The new, and very heuristic, term “transvitality” was first introduced into the thesaurus of modern personality psychology in the work of L.S. Akopyan [2, p. 12].

Akopyan’s articles discuss “transvital meanings”, which embody the aspiration of people (especially elderly people) for post-life continuation, the desire to leave behind a memory in deeds, ideas, in created material and non-material values, in descendants. “Transvital meanings”,

in our opinion, embody what we understand as the need for personalization, i.e. the human desire to find its ideal representation and continuation in other people, and this desire is interpreted by us as a manifestation of the fundamental human need for immortality [22; 25].

It should be noted, however, that the new term potentiates something more than “transvital meanings”. The meaning of this term includes, in our opinion, a number of interrelated phenomena, each of which deserves special attention. We are talking about manifold forms of existence of the Self (“I exist”), which do not coincide with the manifestations of an individual’s life activity in the system of processes of reproduction of his psychophysical integrity.

**The aim of the research** is to substantiate the possibility of the existence of the transvital Self as a special phenomenon of human existence *on* the border and *beyond* (“on the other side”) of the present forms of his/her life activity.

**Research methods.** The research principles of general personology [28], [33] are implemented in the work: the analysis of cultural texts, evidence of consciousness and biographical data of people, the author’s experimental methods (“virtual agency”, “reflected agency”, multi-agent dialogues in the counseling process).

## 1. The Idea of Transvitality

This paper deals with one of the central problems of “peak psychology” (L.S. Vygotsky) — the problem of the Self. Among many other aspects of the problem is the phenomenon of the presence of the Self in the world “beyond” or “on the other side” of its present existence as an individual, beyond the task of *reproducing* itself as a psychophysical integrity. The term *transvitality*, which is quite new for psychology, is used. In its original meaning, it is associated with the answer to the fundamental question of being: “What will be left of me in the world after I die?” [2]<sup>1</sup>. This is an important, but, as it seems, not the only meaning of the term.

Three meanings, equally important and critically irreplaceable in the understanding of the “Self” as a transvital being, can be singled out.

### 1.1. The Supra-Vital Self

Proceeding from the understanding of the individual as a psychophysical whole [30] and *vitality* (life per se) as a set of processes of reproduction of the individual, we say that the value of human being is obviously higher than the ability of a person to adjust to the world, to

adapt, realizing natural drives and assigned social requirements (even if refracted through one’s own experience) [31]. But the fact or, perhaps, the “drama” of human existence is also that the vital, life aspirations of man often contradict themselves, as if “turning” against themselves: “To live is to die” (vitality turns into lethality); “There is a disease from which everyone dies” (this is life); “You went into a room and found yourself in another”; they were looking for Ivan the Terrible’s library, but unearthed something that has nothing to do with the “spiritual”. A person sets a goal and eventually misses, sometimes acting in his own favor (for example, he finds a treasure), sometimes to his own detriment; a “life impulse” (pathetics of life), dramatically “breaks” with life, not turning into a “breakthrough”<sup>2</sup>; this happens in cognition, love, business, invention. Resorting to a metaphor: a “Black Swan” [Taleb, 2012] lives inside people and “pecks” them in the brain, in the heart, in the liver; a person is a “generator of uncertainty” (A.G. Asmolov [2]), loses control over the consequences of what he does and how he lives; he loses his agency.

Transvitalism, in its first meaning, is a way of affirming *human agency* as such — *authentic human agency*<sup>3</sup>, i.e. the ability to control the results of one’s choices even when it is impossible to guarantee the achievement of what one wants. Human agency in this case is defined by the fact that the absence of guarantees encourages a person to set a goal that may not be achieved. In this and only in this case a person, paradoxically, is able to control the outcomes of his actions (anticipating success or failure in advance). Intentional choice of the *undecided* opposes *vitality* as a tendency to the guaranteed reproduction of what is or was. This is the essence of *active maladaptivity* (Petrovsky [27; 31]); here the *challenge* provokes *choice*: it lures by unpredictability, unpredictability of expected outcomes of action.

We note the signs of transvitality in cognition, creativity, and communication with relatives and those far away. We discover a class of phenomena of authentic human agency: refusal of hints when solving difficult problems [14; 27]; the “presumption of the existence of a solution” when we do not know whether a solution exists at all [27]; posing problems in the place of a solved problem [34; 5; 17]; performing “inversive actions” [16]; “non-reactive” creation of task complexity [44].

### *Biographical examples.*

The father of Hungarian mathematician J. Bolyai, himself a mathematician, exhorted his son not to take

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<sup>1</sup> L.S. Akopyan thoroughly researched the fears of people at different stages of age development, and, what is especially important in the context of this review, the conditions of overcoming the fear of death in old age through the actualization of “transvital meanings”.

<sup>2</sup> From V.P. Zinchenko’s remarks about one of his colleague’s works: “It was an impulse (according to Bergson), but by no means a breakthrough”.

<sup>3</sup> We speak about authentic agency, because the term “agency, subjectivity”, defined by us as *causa sui* [27] and that gave the title of the doctoral dissertation, was practically not used by psychologists in those years, and today it is used in an extended sense, meaning purposefulness, arbitrariness, efficiency, etc.



up the proving of Euclid's postulate V (there were cases of madness on this ground), but the son disobeyed his father's advice and, in parallel with Lobachevsky, immortalized himself by creating non-Euclidean geometry.

A similar example explaining the idea of transvitality in the aspect of non-adaptability. Nikolai Lobachevsky, unlike Gauss, risked publishing his geometry that contradicted all canons (however, cautiously called "imaginary") and earned a lot of censure from others. Obviously, immortality in the memory of generations and immortality in the eyes of contemporaries are different things. Thus, at Lobachevsky's funeral, high figures of mathematics and enlightenment were not supposed to talk about the scientist's whimsy, with his "imaginary geometry", while it was quite proper to talk about the first rector of Kazan University, N.N. Lobachevsky. However, it was censored. In the sincere and sad eulogy of Professor N.N. Bulich nothing was said about Lobachevsky's "imaginary geometry", but the speaker also deserved censure; he was accused of atheism and political unreliability on the denunciation of the then rector of the Theological Academy [on this speech see: 11].

What do we know about the youth of the "maladaptive" Lobachevsky? "Studying at the state's expense, he lived practically in barracks conditions: he could not freely leave the gymnasium and university and see even his mother, he was obliged to follow a strict schedule and discipline. Nevertheless, the young man grew up freedom-loving and stubborn. He loved, as they say, to dabble. His name was entered 33 times in a special book of violations — the conduit. Lobachevsky rode a cow; jumped over the obese Professor Nikolsky on a bet; went to masquerades, despite the ban, launched a rocket in the university yard. For the last offense, he served three days in the punishment cell — then it was an educational measure. For participation in masquerades Lobachevsky was almost expelled and sent into the soldiers ... In adulthood Lobachevsky was not the only mathematician who approached the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry. But it was Lobachevsky who was the first to publish a work that challenged all previously held notions in mathematics. He was the only one who actively continued to work on non-Euclidean geometry and to publish his works on it, despite the criticism <...> "Contemporaries considered Lobachevsky a freak scientist. He never saw scientific recognition during his lifetime, and died in poverty." [7]. The corresponding "criticism" (I cannot help

putting quotation marks) of Lobachevsky's works was crushing (I will allow myself a more accurate emotional word — *disgusting*)<sup>4</sup>.

There are three possible outcomes when a person — maladaptively — accepts the challenge.

The first option is the story of the protagonist of Crime and Punishment, Rodion Raskolnikov, and similar stories. Raskolnikov... He, as we know, "dared to want to dare", he wanted to prove that he was "not a louse" and "not a trembling creature". For this purpose, he acted thoughtfully: he took and killed the old woman. He showed the "freedom" of his own will. The finale: penal servitude and repentance, and then consolation in the person of Sonechka. It turns out: Crime — Punishment — Redemption — Consolation? Agency is tested and seems to be proven. But what is the price and value of this test?<sup>5</sup>

The second variant of the outcome — the flight of V. Chkalov under the Trinity Bridge in Leningrad, with the subsequent expulsion of the pilot from the Air Force for a hooligan act and admiration in the eyes of the people.

The third option is "acting at my own risk and winning". An example is the phenomenon of flutter known to pilots, aircraft bumpiness when crossing the supersonic barrier (identified as a special psychological phenomenon by I.M. Shmelev and described by us as a variant of *mastering behavior* (not to be confused with "coping" behavior, coping) [39; 43].

Non-adaptive personality tendencies have been experimentally investigated by the author since the early 1970s. Many of these phenomena are described in the book "Man Over the Situation" [31] and others. Evolutionary problems were practically not touched upon in our books<sup>6</sup>. In contrast to the author of these words, A.G. Asmolov, the founder of the School of Anthropology of the Future, and his colleagues launched a powerful movement to study preadaptivity as an evolutionary phenomenon, the conditions of personogenesis [4]. The special significance of the idea of "pre-adaptivity" in the context of transvitality is emphasized, in our opinion, by the fact that pre-adaptivity is "pregnant" with three variants of its "resolution" in the evolutionary process (which once again confirms the idea of *diversity, multivariate* forms of development defended by Asmolov). The first possibility is *adaptability* proper (i.e. adaptability at a new turn, which seems to be directly indicated by the word "*pre-adaptability*"). The second possibility is *maladaptivity* (destruction). The third possibility is *supra-adaptivity*.

<sup>4</sup> The history of active maladaptivity (boldness) of active science and education is a separate topic worthy of consideration. I know from the words of A.V. Petrovsky, as a historian of psychology, that at the funeral of V.A. Sukhomlinsky the higher authorities did not recommend talking about the "non-standard" views of the outstanding educator, but, to the credit of scientists, this instruction was not executed.

<sup>5</sup> It is natural to wonder if the author of the novel is not playing with himself in the person of a character. Is he not trying to confront himself? There is a great space for projections of all kinds of "experts", no matter how they call themselves — literary critics, literary critics, literary critics, personologists (Brudny [6]), psychoanalysts or, as the author writing these lines, "personologists" [28; 33; 35]. The novel is dialogical, and its finale is not a point, but a question mark or an ellipsis.

<sup>6</sup> We find a bold attempt to describe the phenomena of primitive culture in the context of active maladaptiveness in the book by A.A. Faradzhev [40].

The last of these is transvital (does not produce a future spiral of adaptability), does not produce a role model, and forms a fundamentally *unique* being. Supra-adaptivity is self-valuable (it exists “not why”). Let us compare it with a natural phenomenon — the wind: it “blows”, *but not for the sake of something and not for some reason*; it “blows” *for some reason and somewhere*, which does not prevent “it” from turning the blades of a windmill (it is an *acting*, not a *purposeful* reason, if we follow Aristotle [3]).

Supra-adaptivity is not a *norm*, but, perhaps, it is a new *value*: it does not serve the interests of adaptation, does not “adapt” to anything; at the same time, it “itself” does not prescribe anything to anyone (does not require others to “adapt” to it).

Note that a person, going beyond the necessary and proper, at the expense of differences visible to other people, “enters” other worlds — personalizes himself, acquiring a second being, a being beyond himself, his ideal being. E.V. Ilyenkov defined the *ideal* as “the being of a thing outside of a thing”; in this case we are talking about the being of an individual outside of the individual himself, about his existence in other people, — about *other-being* [10, pp. 219-227]. We also use here the term “personalization” to emphasize the acquisition by an individual of the quality of “being a person”.

### 1.2. The Meta-Vital Self

In front of the reader is one of the so-called “magic pictures” (Fig. 1). What do we see? If the reader has enough time and effort, the flat picture will turn into a volumetric one, and the observer will be in for a surprise.

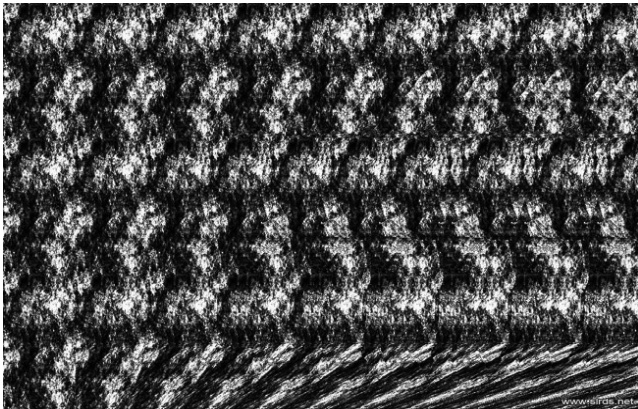


Fig. 1. Let’s look through this picture into the distance and be rewarded by what we see (if we see it)

The fascinating metamorphosis has an additional meaning for us. Psychologically, in addition to the cognitive paradox, no less interesting will be the fact that the person who first saw the hidden object will persuade the other person, who is also contemplating this picture, to see what he or she has seen; will make more and more persistent attempts to “share” his or her experience: “Look, look, look, there, there!..”. And this does not seem to be altruism, but a search for confirmation that he is not deluded in himself

in believing that he is *seeing*. Otherwise, his Self for him is an illusion, a phantom, something akin to a pseudo-hallucination (as understood by V. Kandinsky). Indeed, phenomenologically, something exists *objectively*; this means that “not only I see it, but someone else whom I see (or can see) sees the same thing”; and if what I *observe* is absent for the other, then I am absent for that person *as an observer*: “I am absent at that moment for him”. In other words, to recognize oneself as existing for others is to make sure that the world (the image of the world) you see exists for another. Hence the insistence that others see what is revealed to me.

But how, in what form, do we experience the presence of others in us, their “subjective reflection”?

In Leo Tolstoy’s treatise “On Life” we read: “*My brother has died, but the power of life that was in my brother, not only has not diminished, but has not even remained the same, has increased, and is stronger than before, influences me. ... His attitude to life allows me to clarify my attitude to life.*” [38, c. 412]. But it is not just the image of my brother in my head — it is the “work” that the image produces. The reflected agency (subjectivity) of the other means the subjectivity of the reflection itself — in the form of the influence that the image of the other has on us. The person leaves, and we take into ourselves the vitality of the other. The energy of his life.

The author studied the phenomena of influence empirically, in co-authorship with I.P. Gurenkova; the author used a modification of the Rosenzweig frustration reactions test [see: 37] (Fig. 2):



Fig. 2. Rosenzweig test: a) conventional, b) modified [26, 1985]

The “induced” image significantly changes the nature of agents’ reactions, for example, extrapunitive increases (while reactions to these pictures are rather stable). Such changes affect the originality of associations to stimuli, risk-taking tendencies, self-esteem, self-perception in the mirror, and even perceptual illusions.

The critical question is: what if my existence, due to divergent pictures of reality, is questioned by someone else? What is to be done in a situation of cognitive dissonance, which turns into a feeling of “abolition” of oneself under the gaze of another.

There is no general solution, but there are only some clues to avoid “the trauma of mutual misunderstanding” [32].

### 1.3. The Cross-Vital Self

Fig. 3 shows a man pointing his finger at the viewer (in the original version, a Red Army soldier from a Civil War poster). Who is the man from the poster looking and pointing his finger at? By changing the observation position, we get a different answer.



Fig. 3. “Who is the man looking at?”

It was investigated how children in kindergarten experience such a gaze (unpublished master’s thesis [42])<sup>7</sup>.

Two children sitting on two chairs, some distance apart, were shown a picture and asked “who the man in the portrait is looking at”. Each child naturally answered: “At me!” Then the children, at the direction of the experimenter, moved, changing places. At the same time, the “man” “saw off” each child with a glance, “aim-

ing” with his finger. The children changed places and the question was repeated. Each of them stood their ground: “At me!” They were surprised, argued, insisted.

Sometimes, however, bewilderment gave way to discovery: “The man is looking *at us*.” The idea of “WE” appeared, uniting those who saw *different things*. Five-year-old children “discovered” M. Heidegger. Heidegger’s phenomenon of co-existence (co-presence), “the relation of presence to another presence... The peculiarity of co-presence consists, among other things, in the fact that the presence itself, for the most part, does not separate itself from those with whom it is co-present, they make up a joint world” [41].

The word “co-existence” in Old Russian corresponded to some extent to the word “self-friend”. It meant: “on a pair”, “together (with someone)”, “tete-a-tete”, but also “apart”, “secluded”, “separate”. In the first case, it is not only a statement of the fact that “I am not alone”, but also an experience of community with another person, “me plus another”. In the second case, the stress falls on the first part of the compound word: it emphasizes the fact that “I am alone”, “I am my own friend (and not someone else’s)”, the feeling of absence of someone else with me: “I am *minus* another”. Thus, the word “self-friend” combines opposite meanings: both complicity (pole of identification)<sup>8</sup> and distinctiveness (pole of individuation, distancing). This word is lost, but, phenomenologically, “self-friend” is present in people’s consciousness and, with some semantic losses, is replaced by the word “we”<sup>9</sup>.

Obviously, the “we” conjecture owes its appearance to a deeply childish feeling, much earlier than the age of the mentioned preschoolers. S. Freud wrote about a spontaneous feeling, which, following R. Rolland, he called “oceanic”. In his personal correspondence with Freud, Rolland spoke of “the simple and direct fact of feeling the Eternal, which is devoid of sensual boundaries” and is “as if oceanic...” [see 21].

V.S. Mukhina, significantly expanding the available lists of Jungian archetypes, turns to “archetypal symbols-meanings” that contain the meanings and implications of people’s social positions in relation to each other: “they”, “we”, “Me”, “Not Me”, “Me and others”. In this case, a special place in the “great ideopole of culture” is

<sup>7</sup> The results of the empirical assessment of the prevalence of this phenomenon, the dependence on the age of children, etc. are preliminary, prompting the continuation of the master’s research (interrupted for known reasons in the years of self-isolation between 2021 and 2022).

<sup>8</sup> The term “complicity” has its own prehistory. With reference to Radishchev, it was proposed by A.V. Petrovsky [23], as the semantic equivalent of what the author of these lines previously denoted as DGEI — “effective emotional group identification” (with the corresponding operationalization of the term). “This parameter,” notes A. V. Petrovsky, “allowed us to identify the main components of the psychological characteristic of the phenomenon under study and already in itself contained its detailed description. Nevertheless, the interesting psychological phenomenon that stood behind it was labeled rather verbose. In search of a more successful designation, we turned to the notion often found in the philosophical works of the outstanding Russian thinker A.N. Radishchev — co-participation. The essence of co-participation is in active “co-enjoyment” and compassion. A.N. Radishchev wrote: “Having habituated himself to apply to everything, a man sees himself in the suffering and becomes ill... A man is compassionate to a man, equally he will have fun with him”. Co-participation is a specific type, one of the possible cases, modification of a more general category of interpersonal relations — collectivistic identification” [23, p. 106].

<sup>9</sup> Moving towards “We”, people leave the positions of “Me in you” and “you in me”, and thus “not-Me” and “not-you” emerge, and the experienced “someone” in you and in me is the prototype of the Universal Self (Absolute), which takes various forms in culture; and among them is the “All-Seeing Eye”, certifying a person in the reality (noomenality) of his or her Self.

occupied by the archetypes of “they”, “we”, “Self” and “personality” [20].

Listening to the named symbols-pronouns, we recognize the fact of presence in us of the experience of deep *commonality* of these symbols, the unity of “Me-You-We-Them” in the feeling of the all-pervasive oceanic self, forming a special “archetype” underlying the others. At the same time, if a person *realizes* the previously unreflected sense of “We”, “Me” and “You” are polarized in his consciousness. Thus, in the situation of saving a loved one, an illusion confirming the “theory of rational egoism” may arise, as if the person acted in his own self-interests, although in the impulse he did not distinguish between himself and the other, experiencing community as such [31]<sup>10</sup>.

This seems to be the key to understanding the “group agent”. We discover a cross-existential community of different selves, an active unity based on the pre-reflexive “playback-living” of each participant’s feelings, and, in this sense, the “convergence” of individual volitions into a collective will. Neither “centration” nor “decentration,” but it is “We-Centration” (a special experience in which the distinction between “my Self” and “your Self” is removed) that forms the “substratum” of the collective subject.

And in this context, “I am” means a part of the collective WE, a group agency, a part of “allness”.

## 2. The Theme of Immortality

Considering possible forms of existence of the transvital self, after the question of “transvital meanings”, the researcher inevitably faces the question about the meaning of transvitality itself and whether this meaning exists at all? The answer to this question proposed by the author is hypothetical and not empirically verifiable, but it also has intuitive and cultural-phenomenological grounds. This answer is: “Immortality”, which forms the intentional commonality of the three distinguished hypostases of the transvital Self. The acquisition of “earthly immortality” has been considered by us earlier on the example of the need and ability of personalization [25; 22]. But the theme of immortality in the context of the transvital Self is not limited to this. Each of its hypostases sets its own solution. Let us give some examples as material (and stimulus) for further research of the problem.

*The supra-vital Self: a premonition of immortality.*  
Let us limit ourselves here to two phenomenological discoveries of A.S. Pushkin from A Feast in Time of Plague:

All, all that threatens to destroy  
Fills mortal hearts with secret joy  
Beyond our power to explain—  
Perhaps it bodes eternal life!  
And blest is he who can attain  
That ecstasy in storm and strife!

We emphasize here the paradox of transformation of the threat of death (interruption of vitality of being) into a pledge of immortality. A few more famous lines:

There’s rapture in the bullets’ flight  
And on the mountain’s treacherous height,  
And on a ship’s deck far from land  
When skies grow dark and waves swell high,  
And in Sahara’s blowing sand,  
And when the pestilence is nigh.

Here too, Pushkin’s “pledge of immortality” on the boundary between life and death, rapture on the boundary between “vital and lethal”, a vivid example of the immortality of the transvital Self.

*Meta-vital Self: immortality as otherness.* Let us return to Tolstoy’s words about a departed loved one. Does “his attitude to life always allow me to clarify my attitude to life”? Potentially — yes! However, of the people who inherit the lives of departed loved ones see in themselves the “growing power of life” of those who have left. What lesson can be drawn from what has been said regarding immortality?

This question is appropriate in a psychological counseling setting. The author’s example from his own experience (the wording has been changed, the dialog has been transformed into a monologue, but the meaning is the same): “Your loved ones have left you, but they, you must agree, have become even closer to you now! — They live in you, do not prevent it. Do not listen to those who advise to say goodbye by “kissing”, as some of my colleagues, transactional analysts, teach! Think what the departed would say to you now, if they saw you in suffering refuse to live, “in memory of your neighbor”. And if you were able, let us say, to “voice” the voices of the loved ones who, having left, have now become closer to

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<sup>10</sup> In our works [30; 31] we noted the expediency of distinguishing the qualities of the “first” and “second” kind in the phenomenal field of an individual. Qualities of the first kind (geometrical representations, red, pain, etc.) do not undergo phenomenological transformation at the moment of reflexion; qualities of the second kind, like microobjects in physics, when becoming the subject of active research (reflexion), undergo certain changes: the thing being reflexed turns out to be not indifferent to the reflexion itself. A sense of community with the world (J.P. Sartre), including community with other people, can also belong to the category of qualities of the second kind. Both these and other qualities at the moment of reflexion can lead to the disintegration of the experienced fusion with the world, and in this process the subject-object relation or, respectively, Me and the other (others) is born.

you, then in this case you would feel how important it is for you to live, because now not only you, but also the loved ones living in you demand it from you.”

However, the true earthly immortality of those who have left, or rather “passed” into the lives of other people, the transvitality that has taken place, implies something more than the active memory of those who are not physically around. It is important that “those who have left” know, feel that they remain (if this is achieved, who in this case would dare to claim that they *do not exist?* — Only strangers!). I believe that in childhood such an image of earthly immortality (“I will stay alive!”) is possible at the level of feelings, not just rational anticipation. Future research should show whether, and in what periods of childhood, there is a special sensitivity of children towards the perception of this idea, — whether sensory periods for the formation of such anticipation-prediction can be singled out (the author does not touch upon here the problem of faith, immortality of the soul, in various religious confessions).

*Cross-vital Self: immortality as all-existence.* The sense of WE is not limited to the scale of dyads, triads, contact groups of any size. It extends beyond the space of physical interaction between people. A special phenomenon is contacts “through time” with those “far away” who are brought together by a common cause, interests, aspirations.

Thus, when a scientist makes a discovery, he, through space and time, “comes into contact” with those with whom he communicates (perhaps mentally), to whom he responds with his creativity and whom he himself is ready to develop in his works. The point of contact is the discovery itself. It unites a person not only with those who participated in the search, but also with the truth as such, which exists outside of time. For example, mathematical discoveries always reflect what pre-exists cognition. Conventionally speaking, Pythagoras’ theorem existed before Pythagoras; the geometrical relations discovered by him were, are, and will always be; they do not reside in “created” (physical) time, but in “eternity” (“being, which has eternity as its measure, is not subject/agent to any change and is incommunicable with it,” wrote the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas [1]. Now the scientist himself, as well as his predecessors, exist for him “through time”.

Obviously, it is not only about the discoveries of philosophers, scientists, artists, poets. The same kind of phenomena includes the evidence of history that lives in people’s memory, the phenomena of intergenerational continuity, the “legacies of old times”, if descendants have not yet had time to betray them in response to the challenges of modernity.

This could remind the reader of V.I. Vernadsky’s idea of “noosphere”. But the analogy with the noosphere, the highest state of the biosphere, would have

a purely external character in this case, not expressing the essence of the transvital Self. Geological (Vernadsky), and theological (E. Leroy, T. Tarden) ideas would be inappropriate here. Even less adequate in this context are references to occult practices, parascientific concepts, phenomena of clairvoyance, mesmerizing mysteries of “communication with the dead”. The cross-vital Self, enclosing the idea of immortality, is the phenomenon of all-unity (all-existence) of people of different times and spaces, the feeling of community (oneness) of all with all, the experienced unity mediated by the “great ideopole of culture”.

“The human spirit...penetrates with its spearhead into the past, into the future, into distant countries, ...is always paradoxical, always unexpected...a person can forget about his past...he can move to another city, he can change his name, he can change many things. But it will not kill him, because he himself remains, this is his “Self” [19].

There seems to be one common feature that unites all those who acquire the inter-spatial and through-temporal status of their being in the world. We dare to say it in this way: the surplus of life present in transvitality:

Like a lost man wandering out of the wilderness.  
wants to break free  
so eager  
MORE!

To make ends meet on a budget,  
so that there’s a balance  
for immortality.

Necessary,  
when the journey is over,

**The surplus of life**  
to transcend.

### 3. The Sign of the Transvital Self

The idea of transvitality has always been implicitly present in culture, as an indication of a certain integrity, a special quality of human existence, but a *word* was needed to denote this quality.

It is possible that in time, in addition to the word “*transvitality*”, or, more precisely, the *text* as a “machine for producing meanings” (V.S. Sobkin), a *visual sign* of transvitality will also appear, a new “stimulus-means” (L.S. Vygotsky) of believing oneself in being, which takes a person beyond the limits of his or her own *limited* relations with the world, a point of “assembly” of many and many — according to V.T. Kudryavtsev [15]. For example, — such a sign (with comments in the right part of the diagram “Yin and Yang” and under it) (Fig. 4).

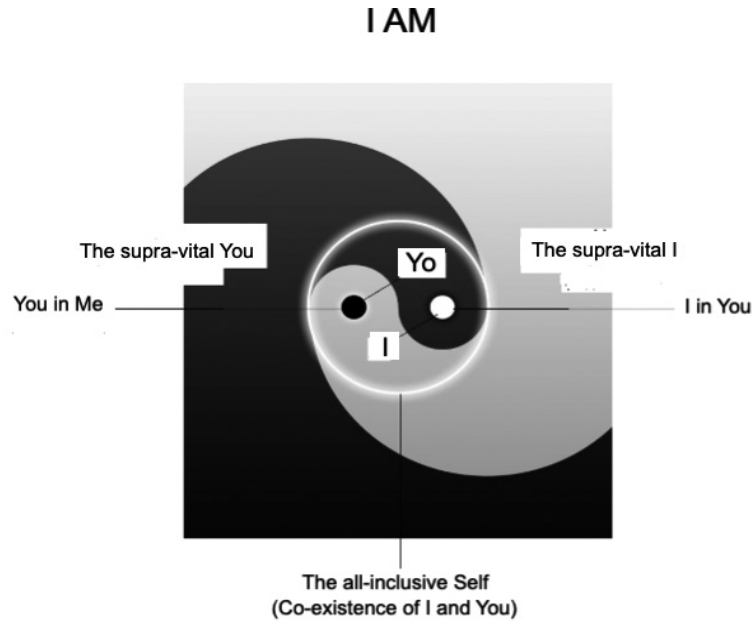


Fig. 4. Transvital Self (comments on the right side of the figure and under it)

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## Scheme of Lev Vygotsky's Theory. Part 2

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Reconstructing the views of a scientific genius is a process of approaching an understanding of the personality, the thinking, and the meaning of the views that transcends the limitations of time. A process that is especially relevant when paradigms change. In this article we address the ontological heart of L.S. Vygotsky's theory, his idea of the “whole” and the “one”. We show that these key concepts, on which his idea of the psyche as a network of “units of analysis of the whole” is built, contain the content corresponding to the postnonclassical paradigm. Vygotsky's “unity” and “whole” are not the same thing. The three mental functions are fused into a unity possessing new properties, which are manifested in each of these functions. We find this when we pay attention to an independent function, separate from the others. The psyche, according to Vygotsky, is arranged as fusions of three functions (triangulation) and connections between these “unities” (network). The “unities” form the whole. The whole is given and not given at the same time. The “unity” becomes a whole reflecting the larger whole, the whole psyche. The genesis of the “unity” leads to a whole that is not equal to the sum of its parts. Such a whole is identical to the concept of modality. Vygotsky's approach to the construction of psychology can give rise to the development of modal psychology.

**Keywords:** unit of analysis of the whole, unit, whole, psyche, modality, mental function, personality.

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## Схема теории Льва Выготского. Часть 2

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Реконструкция взглядов гения науки — это процесс приближения к пониманию личности, мышления и значения взглядов, преодолевающих ограничения времени. Процесс — особенно актуальный при смене парадигм. В статье мы обращаемся к онтологической сердцевине теории Л.С. Выготского, его представлению о «целом» и «едином». Мы показываем, что в эти ключевые понятия, на которых выстраивается его представление о психике как сети «единиц анализа целого», вкладывается содержание, соответствующее постнеклассической парадигме. «Единое» и «целое» у Выготского — не одно и то же. Три психические функции сплавляются в единое, обладающее новыми свойствами,

которые проявляются в каждой из этих функций. Данное мы обнаруживаем при обращении внимания на функцию как самостоятельную, отдельную от других. Психика, по Выготскому, устроена как сплавы трех функций (триангуляция) и связи между этими «единствами» (сеть). «Единства» образуют целое. Целое — данность и не данность одновременно. «Единство» становится целым, отражающим в себе большее целое, всю психику. Генезис «единства» приводит к целому, не равному сумме его частей. Такое целое идентично понятию модальности. Подход Выготского к построению психологии может обеспечить развитие модальной психологии.

**Ключевые слова:** единица анализа целого, единое, целое, психика, модальность, психическая функция, личность.

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## The personality of the scientist

For psychology, the ontological foundations presented in philosophy are the necessary foundation of those norms and rules which help scientists comprehend reality. The question of ontology is the main issue of L.S. Vygotsky's theoretical and applied research. The personality of the scientist determines the choice of ontological foundations of the doctrine being developed. The path “from above” – from ontology to psychology, is inherent in Lev Vygotsky by virtue of his education and from a young age began pedagogical practice. Memories of friends and relatives [18] indicate that the hobbies and reasoning of his closest relatives influenced the formation of the value of the dialectical way of research activity.

Perhaps the practically embodied networking in the hobby of esperanto and collecting stamps, expanded his perception and representation of the world. His sensitivity was already in those years internalized from practice into a way of thinking and into a kind of prism through which one could look at the psyche and the processes taking place in it.

Around Vygotsky hovered ideas about human being as the crown of creation and personality are the pinnacle of human development, the importance of the word and the value of art, etc. Lev Vygotsky had great intellectual abilities, dialectical thinking and the ability to apply the developmental method of teaching, he was able to realize the synthesis of ideas and theories, reasoning and conducting experiments.

Personality and the way of his analysis help us understand a subject area and how he was constructing his theory. Recognizing himself and the world as holistic, as evidenced in Vygotsky's early articles and his theatrical criticism, he had no choice but to build on the ontology of the whole and the unified, a theory of psychology. The history and relevance of this psychology in the postnon-

classical paradigm is another confirmation of the truth of his ontological foundations.

In this article, we reconstruct the notion of the unified and the whole in Vygotsky's scheme of a theory of psychology. These concepts deserve special attention not only because of their ontological character, but also because of the distinction made between them.

## On “unity” in the scheme of Vygotsky's theory

L.S. Vygotsky introduces into the scheme of analyzing the psyche the triangulation we wrote about in the first part of this article. He also indicates dialecticality and the result of this connection, the unity. “Unity”, for Vygotsky, doesn't exist by default; it develops, is formed and self-develops. Consequently, “unity” is the process and result of mental activity embodied in its practical products. The study of the processuality of “unity” by L.S. Vygotsky was called historical-genetic method.

Each highlighted by L. S. Vygotsky triangular connection can be referred to his words, referred to the triangulation of perception, speech and action: “The emerged unity <...> that leads to the rearrangement of laws <...> constitutes the true and most important object of analysis aimed at studying the origin of specifically human forms of behavior” [6, c. 23]. Consequently, psychology needs to study the constituted “unities” of mental functions, not each one separately. But, the psychological textbooks of that time and of our time provide students with the structure of the material not by “unities”, but by each individual function. Further, Vygotsky provides an explanation of what is the basis for the formation of a “unity” — it's genesis and structure. He writes: “We shall consider briefly the problem of the unity of higher mental functions, based on the essential similarity which is manifested in their origin and development. Such functions as arbitrary attention, logical memory, higher

forms of perception and movement, which have so far been studied in isolation, as separate psychological facts, now in the light of our experiments appear essentially as phenomena of the same order-single in their genesis and psychological structure" [6, p. 52].

Let's make another conclusion from the above statement about unity. "Unity", what it is in its quality, allows us to draw a watershed between forms of behavior and between levels of development of functions. "Unity", according to Vygotsky, has such power that it determines a generalizing, peculiar to the whole psyche product as behavior. "Unity" accommodates and influences the properties of the whole, of the psyche. The psyche is considered as a product of social development, so "unity" is formed, investigated in the course of the historical development of man and society. "The formation of the complex unity of speech and practical operations is the product of a development process going far into the depths, in which the individual history of the subject is closely connected with its social history" [6, p. 23]. In the above quotation not only the historical-genetic method is given in its entirety, but also the trick that one can meet in the works of L.S. Vygotsky [7]. In other works we pointed out the absence of the third function in the triangular relation, the apparent absence. Lev Vygotsky's texts are dialogical, he dialogues with his interlocutor, be it Freud, Clapared, Blondel, Lévy-Bruhl, Ach and many others. In the dialog, in order to emphasize certain arguments, he highlights them, then in an extended form, then in a condensed form. Where L.S. Vygotsky makes a dyadic connection as an argument, it is necessary to read the text of the whole work or several works in order to understand Vygotsky in the dialog rather than to take literally what is written. The third function is the meaning or the sign, but mostly is the meaning. Therefore, the above unity is read as the unity of speech, meaning and practical operations, as well as "the unity of sensory and motor processes in intellectual operation" [6, p.43], where the unity is built according to the principle of singling out the third ranked element. The scheme can be presented as follows: intellectual operation is the unity of sensory processes, motor processes and intellect. In the operation, the unity, its dynamic state in a triangular connection is reconstructed for the solution of a certain task. The task is the condition that triggers the dynamics within this unity. Let us note that in the above example we are talking about the influence of a factor outside the unity on the unity, on its quality and functioning. Changes occurring in one element of the triangular connection, according to the principle of unity, lead to changes in the other two elements participating in this connection, as well as according to the principle of integrity. Thus, the transformation of the intellect, the emergence of symbolic functions (speech and sign) leads to the destruction of the natural coherence of perception and movement. "Reactions to objects and

to people constitute in children's behavior an elementary undifferentiated unity, from which later grow actions directed to the outside world and social forms of behavior" [6, p. 30]. Differentiation and transformation of functions in the unity qualitatively changes the unity. Natural unity becomes a cultural unity with greater arbitrariness, awareness and logicity. "Symbolic activity is aimed at organizing practical operations by creating second-order stimuli and by planning the subject's own behavior" [8, p. 1059]. Mastering one's own behavior is the result of cultural psychological functions.

Thus, the dynamics of "unity" represents the process of transformation of the undifferentiated state in the triangular connection of three psychological functions to differentiation, representing complex (not direct, not transparent to observation, not unidirectional, not unambiguous, dialectical, conditioned, systemic) connections between the three psychological functions. In the course of this process, complication through differentiation of the connection is realized and qualitative changes in functions change the state of functions, which L.S. Vygotsky denotes as mental and psychological functions. The complication within the "unity" is the transition from mental to psychological (cultural) functions. The direction of development of the human psyche identified by L.S. Vygotsky is initially given and as the human being develops, the conditions of his development are realized differently. In cultural unity functions are so transformed that new qualitative characteristics appear in them, the consequence of which is self-education, self-organization, self-development, self-determination.

### **Reconstruction in Vygotsky's psychology of the "whole"**

The triangular network is dynamic; changes within unities lead to changes in the network as a whole. L.S. Vygotsky introduces the concept of "whole" to reveal the special quality of unity. The whole is the psyche and the whole is unity. In other words, the triangular unity and the triangular polyfunctional network representing the psyche are the whole. The introduction of the whole solves an important methodological problem. The whole can be different: it can be equal to the sum of parts, greater than the sum of parts, and "quantum", each part possessing the properties of the whole [13]. Such representation of the whole reflects the dynamics of changing views and paradigms. The latter corresponds to the post-nonclassical paradigm. For L.S. Vygotsky, each unity is a whole and possesses the properties of the whole of which it is a part. That is why, in the triangular relation, he, revealing the unity of three functions, attracts the demonstration of changes in other functions and reveals the influence of this change on these three functions. He performs actions in a network. This is why, reductionist-

cal thinking makes it difficult to understand Vygotsky. The imperatives of freedom, of the cultured man were not acceptable in the works of L.S. Vygotsky at a certain historical time, but also the misunderstanding of his complex network analysis of the psyche was practically inaccessible to the majority of scientists of that subsequent times, so one may encounter reductionism in the interpretation of his views.

Let us turn to another characteristics of the unity of the human psyche, hence of each “unity” of its functions. The genesis of unity is carried out according to the principle of ontogenesis in phylogenesis and phylogenesis in ontogenesis. Three basic states of unity characterize this genesis: natural, transitional – mental and higher – cultural. The three states of unity translate unity into a new quality, into the whole. The whole in the beginning potentially exists, but this whole is cultivated, formed, realized by itself, as the triangular network of “unities” is transformed.

### **On the “unit of analysis of the whole”**

“Unity” as a whole is according to Vygotsky “unit of analysis of the whole”. The history of the introduction of units and their qualitative differences is briefly disclosed in the work of T. E. Sizikova “Unit of analysis” by L.S. Vygotsky and “modality” by N. Hartmann” [13]. In this article, we emphasize that the “unit of analysis” of the whole in L.S. Vygotsky’s works is presented in two types:

A) The unit of analysis as a dynamic unity in the triangular connection of the functions of the psyche and the psyche itself in the form of these dynamic unities included in the network. L.S. Vygotsky, using the example of word research, writes concerning the analysis that this unity is not able to grasp: “The word itself, which is a living unity of sound and meaning and contains in itself, as a living cell, in the simplest form the basic properties inherent in speech thinking as a whole, appeared as a result of such analysis fragmented into two parts, between which then researchers tried to establish an external mechanical associative connection” [5, p. 14–15] which, in our opinion, in modern conditions has been replaced by masticatory methods.

L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes the following qualitative characteristics of such a “unit”:

– The unit possesses the properties of the whole: “Under the unit we mean such a product of analysis, which unlike elements possesses all the basic properties inherent in the whole, and which is further undecomposed living parts of this unity” [5, p. 15].

– The unit has its “development, functioning, structure” [5, p. 17].

– The unit has and allows to investigate interfunctional relations: “If for the old psychology the whole

problem of interfunctional relations and connections was a completely inaccessible area for research, now it becomes open for the researcher who wants to apply the method of the unit and replace the method of elements with it” [5, p. 21].

– The unit presents opposites and this is a necessary condition for development, which is to be analyzed with the help of “units in which these properties are presented in an opposite form, and with the help of such analysis to try to solve specific questions that arise” [5, p. 15] and further, “apparently, there is every reason to assume that this qualitative difference of the unit in the main and principal is a generalized reflection of reality” [5, p. 16].

– One unit of analysis is capable of generating other units of analysis.

– The unit is selected by the researcher for analysis. The analysis of psyche, respectively, and the idea of psyche, put in the practical activity of people, depends on what unit for analysis the researcher chooses. L.S. Vygotsky, using speech thinking as an example, writes the following: “On this path we can expect a direct answer to the questions we are interested in about the relationship between thinking and speech, because this relationship itself is contained in the unit we have chosen, and by studying the development, functioning, structure, and movement of this unit in general, we can learn much of what will allow us to clarify the question of the relationship between thinking and speech, the question of the nature of speech thinking” [5, p. 17]. The whole and units are constructed by him on the basis of certain laws. So for inner speech he writes that “completely different laws of construction of the whole and semantic units prevail” [5, p. 239]. Several questions follow from this statement: “What are the laws of construction of the whole? What is a whole that is not an entity, a given, constructed by the researcher?”. This article tries to answer these questions.

B) unit of analysis as a substrate unit. For example, L.S. Vygotsky writes about the word: “It is speech and thinking at the same time, because it is a unit of speech thinking. If this is true, then it is obvious that the method of research of the problem we are interested in cannot be other than the method of semantic analysis, the method of analysis of the semantic side of speech, the method of studying verbal meaning” [5, p. 17] and further, “the unifying point of all these separate studies is the idea of development, which we tried to apply first of all to the analysis and study of word meaning as a unity of speech and thinking” [5, p. 17]. Consequently, L.S. Vygotsky clarifies that a substrate unit is a unit of unity representing a whole.

In our other works we considered the identity of the concepts of “unit of analysis of the whole” by L.S. Vygotsky and the concept of modality as a unit of analysis of the whole by B. Spinoza and N. Hartmann [13; 14]. This allows us not only to introduce the distinction

between “unit of analysis” in L.S. Vygotsky and “unit of analysis” in other works, for example, in the activity approach [13]. In philosophical tradition, modality denotes a unit of analysis of the whole. Traditionally, modality is understood as a way, a kind, a measure. “Modality (Latin *modus* – way, kind) – is the way, kind of being or co-existence; categories of modality are: possibility, reality, necessity; modal means being conditioned by circumstances; modal analysis is a study of modality” [4]. In modern psychology, the concept of modality has found its application in many works [3; 11; 12], but the studies do not pay attention to triangulation within modality. Using reflexion as an example, we made such an attempt [15] and saw how cultural historical psychology and psychology of modality can be mutually enriched, which is still like a sprout, but is capable of growing and taking shape as psychology of modality on the basis of Lev Vygotsky’s cultural historical psychology [16].

Educated and culturally developed Lev Vygotsky followed the philosophical tradition. Lev Vygotsky’s favorite philosopher, B. Spinoza operated with modalities, *modus* as a way of analyzing the whole, the Absolute. G.W.F. Hegel, who knew well the works of B. Spinoza, thanks to the translation into German of “Ethics” did not escape his influence, but “... did not like to specify exactly what he was indebted to his teachers and teachers of his teachers. The truth, revealed to him as a result of hard work, study, he proclaimed as the very truth, regardless of who were extracted its preconditions and results” [2, p. 95] applied modal categories. B. Spinoza wrote: “5. By *modus* I mean the state of substance (*Substantiae affectio*), in other words, that which exists in another and appears through this other” [17, p. 4]. Hegel deepened the notion of *modus*, preserving its dialecticality and relation to the subject “... reflexion as removing itself in its definitions and, in general, as movement returning to itself is truly absolute identity, and at the same time it is the process of determining the absolute or its modality. *Modus* is therefore the external of the absolute, but equally only as its reflection into itself; in other words, it is its own detection (Manifestation) of the absolute, so that this detection (*Außerung*) is its reflection into itself and thus its in-itself-and-for-itself-existence” [10, p. 349]. “... it is the reflexive own movement of the absolute, a process of determination, but not such a process by means of which the absolute would become something else, but a process of determination only of what it already is” [10, p. 597]. In fact, this is L.S. Vygotsky’s “unit of analysis of the whole”, which has its own modal essence and dialectics of development.

Let us focus on the role of the researcher in identifying the “unit of analysis”. The consciousness developed in meaning and culture is able to identify and apply modality in the analysis. Modality itself is the ultimate abstraction, which the researcher endows with content

and meaning. N. Hartmann [9], who based his critical ontology on the method of modal analysis, believed that the future in science is behind this method. According to Hartmann, ontic modalities of the necessary, possible, actual and their opposites should be found in the subject of research, whether it is natural-scientific or humanitarian knowledge.

Thinking and consciousness, which is able to realize the fusion of rational and irrational, logical and mythological, are capable of seeing reality with the help of modalities. A.G. Asmolov, emphasizing personality in the postnonclassical paradigm, wrote about L.S. Vygotsky: “Mythopoetic thinking is a very special type of rationality. And in the epistemological context in which M.K. Mamardashvili criticized the classical ideal of rationality, the positive research program implemented by L.S. Vygotsky with the reliance on mythopoetic thinking is highlighted for us. His texts are distinguished not so much by their cognitive meaningful character, but above all by their semantic polyphony” [1, c. 7–8].

Whatever whole Vygotsky constructs, be it speech, distinguishing in it oral, internal, written speech; thinking, distinguishing in it autistic, practical, symbolic; perception, revealing in it what belongs to the immediate, categorical, symbolic and other whole, he clearly observes the triple logic of primary distinction into natural, mental and psychological functions. In each whole he finds manifestations belonging to the three kinds of functions. Three criteria consisting of opposites are central to the derivation of the distinctions: spontaneous vs arbitrary, conscious vs unconscious, abstract vs logical. To confirm this, let us cite L.S. Vygotsky’s quote about speech: “a sharp divergence between his oral and written speech; this divergence is determined and measured by the difference in the levels of development of spontaneous, involuntary and unconscious activity, on the one hand, and abstract, arbitrary and conscious activity” [5, p. 240].

Based on the logic of L.S. Vygotsky, we involuntarily make a reasonable association with the modalities of the possible, necessary, actual and their opposites developed in the philosophical tradition of modal analysis, which included B. Spinoza, a favorite philosopher of L.S. Vygotsky.

In this tradition, which itself is heterogeneous, the common feature of the analysis is finding the manifestation of these modalities in phenomena and naming them. Our analogy allows us to form a hypothesis that L.S. Vygotsky found manifestations of arbitrariness, logicity (systematicity), consciousness and their opposites in psychological phenomena. Drawing parallels between possibility and awareness, necessity and arbitrariness, reality and logicity, as well as in arbitrariness finding a correlation between modalities, as well as in logicity, awareness and their opposites, is not without reason,

but requires a thorough analysis, which is not the subject of this article. From these positions, modal analysis is promising for the understanding and development of cultural-historical psychology [16].

### Conclusion

Vygotsky's scheme of theory building, which we are reconstructing based on Vygotsky's works, is not speculative. It is a tool for organizing life, in particular, learning, followed by development, which is the keynote of Vygotsky's psychology. In fact, Vygotsky does not present the psyche as separate mental functions, although we can find chapters with the same names as functions "attention", "perception" and so on. Lev Vygotsky singles out alloys of functions, which are formed in the course of the genesis of functions, the growth of an infant into an adult. He designates such a fusion of three functions as a "unity" with new properties. This "unity" becomes the whole. The concepts of "unity" and "whole" in L.S. Vygotsky's works are identical or different. The difference is most pronounced in the analysis of infancy, identity is pronounced in the analysis of

general theoretical provisions on the psyche. "Unity" has the properties of a "whole" as a whole in a larger whole. Should be noted, that the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts. This is an important ontological position that Vygotsky's work places in line with the modern paradigm. Vygotsky conceives "unities" as "units of analysis of the whole". Vygotsky's understanding of "units of analysis of the whole" corresponds to the concept of modality applied to the study of the whole by ontology and other sciences. Translated into modern, applied scientific concepts, we can state that three functions united as a "unity", form a triangular relationship, is modality in its characteristics. The psyche is a whole formed by the "unities" which become the whole, and the connections between them. This whole is a large whole in small wholes. The whole has dynamic properties. We have reconstructed this view of Vygotsky and in the modern understanding it is a dynamic triangular network of modalities in which the transformation of the whole is realized. Vygotsky's views give the development of modal psychology, what Vygotsky pointed out as the analysis of psyche using "units of analysis of the whole", using the "unities" and the "whole".

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# The Concept of the Digital Play by S. Edwards in the Context of the Cultural-Historical Paradigm

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The article presents an analysis of the works of S. Edwards devoted to the development of a holistic concept of digital play in the tradition of the Cultural-Historical Scientific School. The main difficulties are connected with the transformation of the idea of mediation into the context of digital technologies. We analyzed the understanding of the idea of mediation in the works of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev, Y. Engeström. On the basis of the studies of O.K. Tikhomirov, O.V. Rubtsova, S.A. Smirnov, G. Rückriem and studied how the concept of mediation can be transformed in the era of digital technologies. We also analyzed the transformation of the key concepts of the cultural-historical psychology in the works of S. Edwards, such as children's play. The contemporary children's play reflects the processes of digitalization and cultural globalization of contemporary childhood. S. Edwards introduces the concept of convergent play as the leading activity of contemporary children. Convergent play is characterized by the blurring of boundaries between traditional and digital play and the integration of digital technologies into the daily lives of children. The author argues that it is necessary to create a holistic concept of digital play corresponding to the cultural-historical tradition.

**Keywords:** digital play, mediation, S. Edwards, converged play, play activity.

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# Концепция цифровой игры С. Эдвардс в контексте культурно-исторической парадигмы

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В статье представлен анализ работ С. Эдвардс, посвященных разработке целостной концепции цифровой игры в традиции культурно-исторической научной школы. Основные сложности связаны с трансформацией идеи опосредования применительно к цифровым технологиям. Рассматривается осмысление идеи опосредования в работах Л.С. Выготского, А.Н. Леонтьева, Ю. Энгестрёма. На примере работ О.К. Тихомирова, О.В. Рубцовой, С.А. Смирнова, Г. Рюкрима показаны возможные способы переосмысления идеи опосредования в эпоху цифровых технологий. Осуществлен анализ трансформации ключевых понятий культурно-исторической психологии в работах С. Эдвардс, посвященных детской игре. В современной детской игре отражаются процессы цифровизации и культурной глобализации современного детства. С. Эдвардс вводит понятие конвергентной игры как ведущей деятельности современного ребенка. Конвергентная игра характеризуется стиранием границ между традиционными и цифровыми играми и интеграцией цифровых технологий в повседневную жизнь детей. Делается вывод о необходимости создания целостной концепции цифровой игры в русле культурно-исторической традиции.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровая игра, опосредование, С. Эдвардс, конвергентная игра, игровая деятельность.



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## Introduction

In the last few years researchers all over the world point out to qualitative changes in preschooler's play activity, including in particular very early acquaintance with gadgets and their early introduction into the play. According to the service, contemporary children get acquainted with gadgets at the age of 6 months [13] and around 88% of parents consider that by late preschool age children have to be capable of using digital media on the own [4]. In this context researchers more and more often speak about the emergence of a new phenomenon which is coined *digital play* [9; 10].

At this very moment there are numerous definitions of digital play. M. Fleer, for example, regards digital play as "the creation of an imaginary digital situation, supported through a specialized form of digital talk where the themes of the play are drawn from children's everyday experience" [20, c. 87]. N.N. Veresov and N.E. Veraksa consider digital play exactly as traditional children's play activity which possesses its system of rules, plots and play actions [26]. O.V. Rubtsova and O.V. Salomatova interpret digital play as play activity, mediated by the use of digital media and various kinds of digital content, where real and virtual objects coexist in real time mode and where the new form of mediation (mobile phone, tablet, etc.) may be regarded exactly as a essential attribute of play as a traditional toy [10].

Digital play exactly as traditional play activity is nowadays an important part of preschooler's lives. However, there are very few researchers of digital play. In the works by O.V. Rubtsova and O.V. Salomatova [9; 10] perspectives of applying Cultural-Historical Theory for understanding the phenomenon of digital play are discussed. The authors analyze how digital play is interpreted in the works by M. Fleer, J. Marsh, N.N. Veresov and N.E. Veraksa etc. At the same time the authors have never focus on the works of a well-known Australian researcher S. Edwards. In her research S. Edwards applies both notions of the Sociocultural Theory and the ideas of C. Hutt. The sociocultural approach in its turn may be considered as one of the posable interpretations of the Cultural-Historical Theory, which is quite widespread in the foreign scientific tradition [23].

**The goal** of this paper is to analyze, to what extend Edward's understanding of the phenomenon of digital play lies in the tradition of the Cultural-Historical Theory. The following research tasks were set in this article: 1) to determine the understanding of the key concepts

of the Cultural-Historical Theory by the classics of the Russian tradition and by the representatives of the Sociocultural Approach; 2) to generalize the possible approaches to research of digital media and 3) to analyze the peculiarities of understanding digital play in the works by S. Edwards.

## The problem of mediation in the works of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev, and Y. Engeström

Despite S. Edwards considering herself a follower of L.S. Vygotsky, it is necessary to highlights that her scientific views have been formed within the English-speaking scientific discourse. The researcher positions herself as a representative of Sociocultural Theory. According to M. Dafermos, the Sociocultural Theory, strictly speaking, is not equivalent to Cultural-Historical Theory but represents its North American interpretation. Thus, Vygotsky's theory has become just one of many sources of inspiration for the founders of Sociocultural Theory [3]. Due to this circumstance, there are fundamental differences in the interpretation of the key concepts among the followers of Vygotsky's theory and the supporters of Sociocultural Theory. In particular, this remark concerns the idea of *mediation* (Russian: «опосредование»).

L.S. Vygotsky's idea of *tool mediation* (Russian: «орудийное опосредование») has been borrowed from the works of S. Edwards.

L.S. Vygotsky depicted the essence of mediation as a triangle (fig. 1), where two stimuli A and B are directly connected in the natural process of activity. If the activity has an instrumental nature, it occurs through the psychological tool C [1].

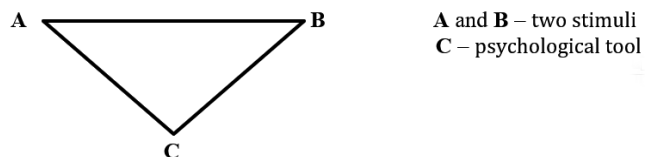


Fig. 1. Relationship between instrumental and natural processes (according to L.S. Vygotsky)

L.S. Vygotsky distinguished between *technical* and *psychological tools* when discussing tool mediation: "The essential difference between a psychological tool and a technical tool lies in its direction of action to-

wards the psyche and behavior, whereas a technical tool, also being inserted as an intermediary between human activity and the external object, is directed towards causing certain changes in the object itself; a psychological tool does not change anything in the object; it is a means of influencing oneself (or others) – the psyche, behavior – rather than a means of influencing the object” [1, p. 106]. Expanding on the idea of mediation, L.S. Vygotsky introduced the concept of a *sign* to denote “any artificially created conditional stimulus by a human being, which serves as a means of mastering behavior – either someone else’s or one’s own” [2, p. 78]. There are significant differences between *tools* and *signs*. With a tool, a person influences the object of activity and must bring about changes in that object. A sign is a means of psychological influence on one’s own or someone else’s behavior [2, pp. 89–90].

A.N. Leontiev further developed Vygotsky’s ideas on mediation. He attributed the mediating role not to signs but to activity itself: “...the child’s consciousness is the product of his human activity in relation to the objective reality, taking place in the conditions of language, in the conditions of speech communication” [6, p. 18]. Thus, while according to L.S.Vygotsky, the process of mediation takes the form of “subject-sign/tool-object,” for A.N. Leontiev, it takes the form of “subject-activity-object.”

Like many foreign authors, S. Edwards relies on the interpretation of Vygotsky’s works proposed by the well-known Finnish researcher Y. Engeström [5; 11]. While Engeström’s ideas have found wide practical application, his concept significantly differs from Vygotsky’s original concept and represents more of a combination of Cultural-Historical Theory, Activity Theory, and elements of other theories [3]. Y. Engeström does not distinguish labor-mediated activity and activity one’s own behavior, that means he does not distinguish between tool mediation and sign mediation. Y. Engeström’s triangle of mediation expands to include concepts such as society, rules, division of labor, etc., but it omits the distinction between psychological tools and signs [5; 11; 12].

Engeström’s concept has been often criticized by researchers who have access to both Russian and English works of L.S. Vygotsky [3; 5; 11; 12]. The criticism mainly revolves around Engeström’s disregard for fundamental disagreements between followers of Cultural-Historical Theory and Activity Approach, as he combines these two concepts into a single theory known as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) [3; 21].

## Digital technologies in the context of mediation problem

Under the information revolution recently many researchers have been rethinking the problem of mediation, in particular, focusing on various approaches to digital devices as new means of mediation. Several directions of research can be distinguished in this area.

Supporters of the *first direction* believe that, on the one hand, digital technologies mediate the use of signs. On the other hand, they believe digital technologies influence both practical human activity and internal mental processes. Accordingly, they affect both inter- and intrapsychic functions. Thus, the changes occurred have a different nature than those occurring in sign mediation activities, one can speak of the emergence of new qualities of awareness and voluntariness [14].

In the framework of the *second direction*, digital technologies are considered both tools and signs. “In some circumstances, a computer or mobile phone can primarily act as a tool used for information transmission (sending emails or SMS messages), and in other circumstances, the same means can act as a sign mediating various mental functions and processes (communication through social networks, participation in computer games, etc.)” [8, p. 119]. At the same time, it is difficult to clearly define the boundary between instrumental and sign use, as the transition from one type to another occurs very quickly (sometimes these processes unfold in parallel) [7; 8].

Supporters of the *third direction* believe that the use of digital technologies simplifies the structure of activity: “There is no working interval between pressing the button and the result, i.e. the actual work, the objective action, the result of which became a certain product, and there is no feeling of involvement in this action and result. Thus, we obtain the same stimulus-response behavior pattern” [12].

In the framework of the *fourth direction*, digital technologies are considered through the prism of media theory. Its supporters depart from the concepts of tool and sign and focus on describing and studying the changes in the environment caused by the introduction of digital technologies. They rely on the ideas of Media Theory (H.A. Innis, H.M. McLuhan, etc.). According to these authors, this theory can provide the methodological tools necessary for the formation of a model, stages, and laws of transition between different leading media<sup>1</sup> and thus help in the development of a new concept of the environment [11].

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<sup>1</sup> Media (plural form of Latin “medium” – “middle”, “intermediary”) is a term widely used in works dedicated to the issues of digitization (“digital media”, “new media”, etc.). It simultaneously serves as a synonym for the concept of “technology” and the concept of “means”, but it can also have other meanings.

### Refraction of the Cultural-Historical Theory in the works by S. Edwards

S. Edwards is one of the leading contemporary researchers of digital play and convergent play (see the concept of convergent play below). In her works, an attempt is made to create a comprehensive concept of digital play based on the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky.

Referring to the aforementioned work of L.S. Vygotsky [1], S. Edwards understands the idea of tool mediation (Russian: «орудийное опосредование») as facilitating human activity through the use of culturally conditioned tools. She schematically represents the idea of tool mediation as a triangle, with a person at one base point, an object at another, and the tool at the vertex of the triangle. Tools can become embedded in cultural tradition over time, so the tool begins to be implicitly associated with the object of activity. This process can be called *implicit mediation*. As a person masters the use of a particular tool, the object of their activity changes, and the process repeats [16].

Using the mediation triangle, S. Edwards explains the educational value of play<sup>2</sup>: at one base point of the triangle is the preschool worker/educator, at the other is the child's opportunity to play. The theories of play serve as the tool, i.e., the rules that the educator relies on when developing a scenario for educational play during their session. Here, theories of play act as implicit mediator [16]. S. Edwards positions digital play among cultural tools. Digital play is derived from the cultural context in which the child is situated, and on this basis, it should be considered as *tools of activity* [17]. Mastering a new tool – digital play – allows the child to expand the range of possible play actions. However, digital play has not yet firmly established itself in the cultural tradition, so it is premature to speak of its implicit nature [16].

It seems that S. Edwards' understanding of mediation reflects more the views of Y. Engeström than L.S. Vygotsky himself. Thus, in S. Edwards' articles, as well as in the works of Y. Engeström, there are no distinctions between tool and sign mediation. They only talk about tool mediation, while sign mediation is not mentioned at all. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, the fact that Y. Engeström combines the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky's and A.N. Leontiev's theories in his concept [3; 5]. Secondly, problems related to accurate translation. The term "mediation" is often used by Russian authors to denote tool mediation (Russian: «опосредование»). The term «опосредствование» is used to denote sign mediation. However, when translating, the words "tool" and "sign" may be omitted, and

both tool and sign mediation are translated as "mediation" [12].

Besides the idea of mediation, S. Edwards focuses on other important concepts of cultural-historical psychology: leading activity (Russian: «ведущая деятельность»), higher mental functions (Russian: «высшие психические функции»), and the social situation of development (Russian: «социальная ситуация развития»).

*Leading activity* refers to the ways of transforming existing modes of thinking and cognition into more complex forms of psychological engagement, which are connected to the social and cultural situation that forms the basis for learning and development. Leading activity is not dominant during a specific period of development; rather, it functions as «... a bridge that supports a child's transition from one psychological function to another across the developmental lifespan» [18]. Mastery of *leading activity* leads to a change in the *social situation of development*, which in turn gives rise to a new *psychological function*. The psychological functions that emerge in children from birth to adolescence include sensory-motor function, perception, emotions, memory, and thinking [18]. It is likely that S. Edwards understands higher mental functions as these psychological functions.

According to L.S. Vygotsky's theory, higher mental functions initially arise as forms of collective behavior in children, as forms of cooperation with others, and only later do they become individual functions of the child themselves, i.e., the environment serves as the source of the formation of higher mental functions. Leading activity connects the child with elements of the environment that are sources of psychological development during this period. In this activity, fundamental personal innovations are formed, psychological processes are restructured, and new types of activity emerge [1; 2].

In addition to the ideas of Cultural-Historical Psychology, S. Edwards relies on the works of C. Hutt in her research on play. C. Hutt's work aimed to find differences between *investigation* and *play* activities of children [24]. She pointed out a fundamental difference between these types of activities: «The implicit question in the child's mind during investigation seems to be "What can this object do?" whereas in play it is "What can I do with this object?"» [22, p. 70]. Based on this differentiation, C. Hutt divided children's activities into two major classes: *epistemic* behavior and *ludic* behavior. The boundaries between epistemic and ludic behavior are flexible, but epistemic behavior precedes ludic behavior because initially, the child learns to interact with the object.

<sup>2</sup> The European system of preschool education is based on learning through play, therefore special attention is paid to research into the educational potential of play activities.

*Epistemic behavior* (“What can this object do?”) manifests as the child’s desire to acquire new knowledge or information about the object and is goal-oriented or focused on the end product. K. Hutt identifies the following types of epistemic behavior: problem-solving, exploration, and skill acquisition.

*Ludic behavior* (“What can I do with this object?”) is aimed at deriving pleasure from spontaneous activity without a specific goal. Children’s play involves pretending, taking on a certain role, providing enjoyment, and developing imagination. K. Hutt proposes two categories of ludic behavior: fantasy play and repetitive play [22].

According to S. Edwards, any object that initially attracts epistemic and then ludic behavior can be equated to a tool because the use of tools can change the object of activity. This observation also applies to digital objects (e.g., children’s digital cameras, etc.) [15].

In our view, the researcher has made a very important attempt to reinterpret digital play within the framework of Cultural-Historical Psychology, complementing it with the ideas of C. Hutt. However, the author’s understanding of the foundations of Cultural-Historical Psychology needs further discussion and clarification. Despite this, S. Edwards’ concept highlights the crucial problem for researchers of integrating the realities of the digital society into Cultural-Historical Psychology and allows us to see the play of contemporary children as a complex phenomenon that requires interdisciplinary research.

### Understanding of contemporary children’s play in the S. Edwards’s work

S. Edwards is interested in the preschoolers’ play from the perspective of its educational value. The main goal of her research on play is to uncover the educational potential of new forms of play and help educators utilize these new possibilities to make activities with children more productive. Digital technologies can modify traditional games (e.g., recording joint play on video, playing game scenarios in digital space, etc.).

According to S. Edwards, the process of introducing children to digital devices can be seen as a manifestation of *epistemic behavior*: initially, the child explores the functions of the digital device, and then they can use it as a tool to create new game scenarios. In other words, mastering a new tool allows for a change in the object of activity [16].

S. Edwards believes that the use of digital devices is an integral characteristic of the social situation of development for contemporary children. The processes of digitization occur parallel to the processes of *cultural*

*globalization* in modern childhood. Cultural globalization exposes children to characters and narratives of mass children’s culture, while digitization ensures that mass culture constantly surrounds the child. The author refers to this phenomenon as *the digital consumerist cultures* [18; 24].

A new cultural experience finds its reflection in the play activities of modern children. The author identifies the following types of games:

1) *Generic games* – games with traditional toys (such as a toy train, farm set, etc.);

2) *Consumer games* – games using branded toys. Typically, these toys have a backstory created by the brand developers and are associated with mass culture (e.g., Thomas the Tank Engine, Peppa Pig, etc.);

3) *Digital games* – children’s use of gaming applications [24];

4) *Digital-consumerist games* – digital games based on characters and stories from mass culture (e.g., “Thomas and Friends: Minis,” “Safari Day with Peppa Pig,” etc.). According to S. Edwards, digital-consumerist games have greater developmental potential than generic or consumer games [24];

5) *Converged games* – games where the boundaries between traditional and digital games blur, and information and communication technology is integrated into children’s everyday lives [17; 19].

### Converged play as the leading activity of contemporary children

Converged play involves children participating in both traditional and digital games, influenced by cultural globalization and digital media. According to the author, converged play is the leading activity among modern children [17].

Since converged play is a new phenomenon, its nature and educational possibilities have not been fully explored. To study converged play, S. Edwards suggests using a new tool called *web-mapping*. Visually, this tool appears as a network consisting of sectors and circles (fig. 2).

Each sector represents a type of activity of preschoolers related to the use of digital technologies (digital toys, tablets, etc.). The circles represent more “traditional” forms of activities for preschoolers: role-playing games, construction, active games, etc. The intersection between the sector and the circle represents converged episodes of play, where the distinction between digital and non-digital activities disappears. This tool allows educators to see and apply converged play in practice [17].

Based on the analysis of empirical data, S. Edwards identifies three characteristics of converged play (see table) [17].

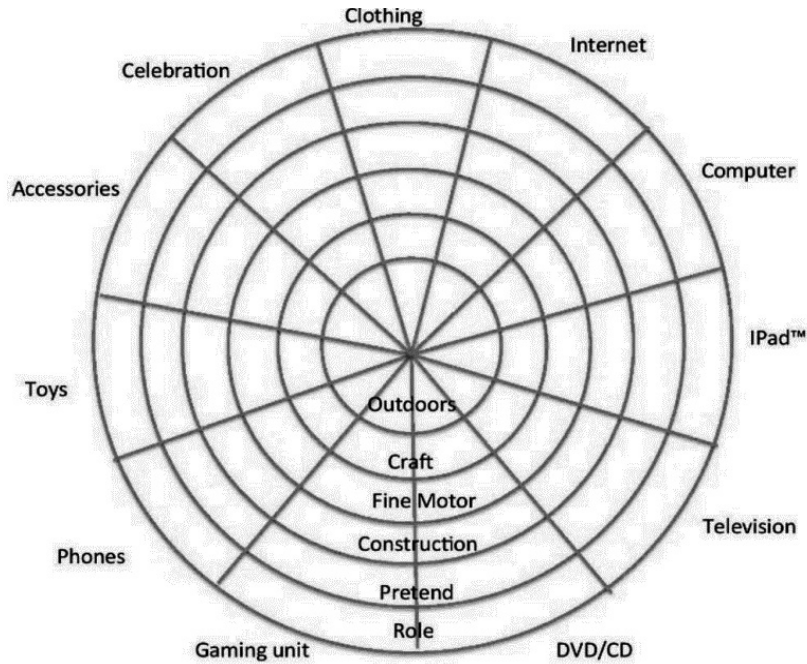


Fig. 2. Web-mapping by S. Edwards [17]

Table

**Characteristics of converged play, according to S. Edwards**

| Name of play             | Explanation   | Example   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Multi-modal play         | Simultaneous use by educators and children of both «traditional» interactions (speaking, listening, drawing, touching, etc.) and «digital» interactions (using tablets, etc.), including for educational purposes.  | The educator knew that the child was playing with LEGO and using digital LEGO applications. She suggested the girl play with the construction set. The girl started telling the educator about one of the LEGO characters. The educator decided to clarify the character's story, took a tablet, and entered a search query. The educator shared what she read on the Internet with the girl, and they continued playing. |
| Global-local play        | Joint use by educators and children of characters and storylines from mass children's culture in play activities, including educational games.  | The educator made cardboard «Pokémon» figures from the game «Pok mon Go» and hid them in the kindergarten playground. Each child had to find the complete set of «Pok mon.» The children had to find the figures, match the ones they already had with the required set, count them, negotiate exchanges, etc.  |
| Traditional-digital play | The possibility of combining material, social, and digital components in children's play to develop cognitive, communicative, and social skills. Essentially, this characteristic shows the absence of differences between traditional play and digital play as separate activities for children. | The educator suggested using a figure of Elsa from the movie «Frozen» for the game. The children had previously watched the movie and knew its storyline. Together with the educator, the children created a sketch of Elsa's palace, made it out of cardboard and paper, and started playing in it.  |

Thus, S. Edwards offers a new perspective on the play activities of modern children. Her proposed method of study helps educators identify elements of transition between digital and non-digital activities in specific episodes of converged play.

**Conclusion**

The problem of analyzing contemporary forms of children's play activity is one of the current challenges

in contemporary psychological and pedagogical science. The main difficulty lies in the lack of a common understanding of the place of digital technologies and digital play in the system of concepts of the Cultural-Historical Psychology.

S. Edwards, based on the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky, attempts to reinterpret the key concepts of the Cultural-Historical Theory in relation to the realities of contemporary childhood. At the same time, as a representative of the Sociocultural Theory, S. Edwards interprets these concepts based on the understanding by such authors as

Y. Engeström, which significantly determines the peculiarity of her scientific views.

In fact, when considering the phenomenon of digital play, the researcher relies exclusively on the ideas of tool mediation, without taking into account sign mediation. Digital technologies are considered by S. Edwards as derivatives of the cultural context of the activity tools. The interpretation of important concepts of the Cultural-Historical Theory, such as higher mental functions, social situation of development, and social environment, requires additional clarification. It seems that the author

replaces them with the concepts of “psychological function” and “social and/or cultural situation,” respectively.

The phenomenon of converged play, understood as a specific form of play activity characterized by constant interweaving of traditional and digital forms of play, as well as the use of narratives and characters from digital culture, is also promising for further research.

The directions of research developed by the author are practically absent in contemporary Russian science, which makes this issue extremely promising and relevant.

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# Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Child Development by L.S. Vygotsky and G. Bowlby

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**Objective:** To compare the positions of L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby regarding three critical aspects of mental development of a child: the characteristics of newborn perception, the extent of an infant's engagement in early social interaction, and the psychological nature of the bond between an infant and its mother. **Method:** a comparative analysis. **Results.** The authors' viewpoints share common ground in acknowledging the child's immediate engagement in social relationships following birth and the pivotal role of a primary caregiver figure in the child's development. Nevertheless, disparities in the interpretation of "primordial we" and "attachment" concepts, employed by the authors to elucidate the specifics of the child's connection with the mother or a caregiver, are explored. The study reveals a divergence between L.S. Vygotsky's postulate of infant helplessness, forming the foundation of the developmental social context at this stage, and J. Bowlby's perspective, emphasizing the presence of highly effective inborn forms of social perception and behavior in infants. **Conclusions.** These disparities in the authors' viewpoints may be attributed to their reliance on different research paradigms, with one emphasizing culture-centred approach and the other adopting an evolution-centred approach. L.S. Vygotsky's assertion about infant helplessness, though lacking empirical validation, maintains its theoretical importance as a direction in the search for the unique course of human development.

**Keywords:** cultural-historical theory, attachment theory, newborn, childhood, infancy.

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## Сравнительный анализ подходов Л.С. Выготского и Дж. Боулби к развитию ребенка на первом году жизни

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**Цель** статьи — соотнести позиции Л.С. Выготского и Дж. Боулби по трем ключевым аспектам психического развития на первом году жизни: характеристикам восприятия у новорожденного ребенка, степени включенности ребенка первых месяцев жизни в социальное взаимодействие и психологическому содержанию связи между младенцем и его матерью. **Метод:** сравнительный анализ. **Результаты.** Обозначено сходство позиций авторов, которое заключается в принятии ими положений о вовлеченности ребенка в систему социальных связей сразу после рождения и об особой роли близкого взрослого в развитии младенца. Рассмотрены различия в содержании понятий «пра-мы» и «привязанность», использованных авторами для описания специфики связи младенца с матерью или заменяющим ее человеком. Показано, что постулат Л.С. Выготского о младенческой беспомощности, помещенный им в основу социальной ситуации развития в этом возрасте,

вступает в противоречие со взглядами Дж. Боулби на существование у детей высокоэффективных врожденных форм социального восприятия и поведения. **Выводы.** Различия во взглядах авторов могут объясняться их опорой на разные исследовательские парадигмы — культурно-центрическую в одном случае и эволюционно-центрическую — в другом. Разрабатываемое Л.С. Выготским положение о младенческой беспомощности, не получив дальнейшего эмпирического подтверждения, сохраняет свою теоретическую значимость как одно из направлений поиска качественного своеобразия хода человеческого развития.

**Ключевые слова:** культурно-историческая теория, теория привязанности, новорожденность, младенческий возраст.

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## Introduction

This study involves a comparison of two theoretical approaches aimed at elucidating the same phenomenon: the mental development of an infant from birth to one year of age. Despite the fact that both the cultural-historical concept and attachment theory were proposed by their respective authors in the first half of the 20th century, the task of comparing their principles remains pertinent. This relevance is underscored by the fact that prominent Russian psychologists, who studied child development through the lens of cultural-historical and activity paradigms, repeatedly revisited questions regarding the specific aspects of child development addressed by attachment theory [1; 4; 8–9; 11; 13]. Evidently, they recognized the profound resemblance between both theories, particularly in their shared assertion of the pivotal role played by the social environment in child development. However, the reception of attachment theory among different Russian scholars could vary significantly, ranging from vehement critique as seen in the works of M.I. Lisina [8], to a more accommodating stance endorsing the possibility of integrating both approaches, as reflected in the works by G.V. Burmenskaya [4]. A comprehensive comparative analysis of the tenets of cultural-historical psychology and attachment theory has not yet been conducted. Meanwhile, the tasks inherent in advancing cultural-historical and activity-based approaches themselves necessitate a lucid comprehension of the commonalities and disparities with alternative theoretical perspectives, as well as the development of one's own standpoint regarding the acceptance or rejection of their propositions [10].

In the first half of the 20th century, L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby were neither the first, nor the only, nor the most renowned researchers in the field of child

development. Pioneering studies had already been undertaken by proponents of psychoanalysis, the reflexology school, cognitive science theories, and various other approaches, each offering their own models explaining child development. The influence of these antecedent ideas and the reliance on data from these studies are discernible in the arguments put forth by both L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby. Nonetheless, these authors pursued divergent, occasionally opposing, trajectories in developing their concepts, founded on disparate conclusions and generalizations. The most crucial and simultaneously contentious aspects in the works of L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby revolve around the following domains:

1. The extent and selectiveness of an child's perceptual capabilities during the neonatal period;
2. The degree and character of an child's engagement in social interactions during the early months of life.
3. The origins and psychological content of the distinctive bond between the child and the mother, or a caregiver, in the child's first year of life.

The structure of the forthcoming comparative analysis is determined by these three domains, and the subsequent text provides an exhaustive review of the authors' positions on each of these domains.

## Infant Perception

At the time L.S. Vygotsky composed his chapter on infancy, there were relatively few empirical studies in this realm, and these primarily related to fields such as medicine, physiology, and reflexology rather than experimental psychology. In Vygotsky's works, during the initial one or two months of life, a child emerges as a self-contained, unconditionally reflexive being, whose higher

nervous functions are still at an early stage, awaiting full development. According to Vygotsky, the newborn's perception is limited to a sense of self, instincts, and drives, while the external world remains beyond their grasp. He articulates this viewpoint by stating, "We are inclined to think that in the first month, neither someone nor anything exists for the baby, that it, rather, experiences all stimuli and everything around only as a subjective state" [5, p. 277]. It is worth noting that, despite Vygotsky's opposition to psychoanalytic notions of childlike solipsism and his view of the child as inherently social, he, to a considerable extent, corroborates the concept of childlike solipsism when discussing the newborn. Nonetheless, he does acknowledge the presence of mental activity in an child from birth, albeit with its physiological basis in subcortical regions of the brain rather than the cerebral cortex regions as in later stages of development. In the newborn, mental life is exhibited through expressive movements, intonated cries, as well as vague states of consciousness and undifferentiated experiences of situations.

Vygotsky's theoretical position introduces a distinctive form of perception in the newborn—an undifferentiated perception that doesn't segment reality into distinct objects. The foundation for this assertion can be traced back to facts presented by K. Koffka, influenced by Gestalt psychology, which indicated that infants in their early months begin to distinguish whole, complex entities within their environment earlier than their individual components. Expanding on these empirical findings, Vygotsky posits that newborns experience profound disparities between consciousness and perception: "The initial perceptions of the child represent an undifferentiated impression of the entire situation, where not only are individual objective aspects of the situation not separated, but the elements of perception and emotion remain undifferentiated" [ibid., p. 277–278].

J. Bowlby held a radically opposing viewpoint. Grounded in a more extensive body of empirical evidence, he argues that "...at birth or shortly thereafter, all sensory systems in the newborn become functional" [3, p. 200]. According to Bowlby, a newborn possesses the ability to discern a broad array of stimuli, displaying keen sensitivity and a wide range of behavioral responses. Furthermore, observations and experiments indicated the presence of distinct sensory preferences and the selectivity of responses in newborns, as he noted, "...the child shows greater attention to certain aspects of the external environment over others" [ibid.]. Expanding his theory of attachment as a component of the broader control system framework in biology, J. Bowlby attributed significant importance to feedback mechanisms. He illustrated how, from the earliest days of life, reinforcement and extinction mechanisms come into play, orchestrating the child's behavior [3].

The disparities in viewpoints between these two scientists are notably extensive. L.S. Vygotsky portrays the newborn as being entirely self-contained, unable to discern individual objects or their attributes from the overall external world. In contrast, J. Bowlby depicts an infant, right from birth, as receptive to sensations, perceptions, and the impact of all external stimuli, as well as selectively responding to them. While L.S. Vygotsky suggests that a newborn's behavioral expressions are restricted to unconditioned reflexes, J. Bowlby's perspective maintains that an child, from the very first days of life, possesses the capacity to adapt and regulate its behavior in response to external influences through feedback mechanisms.

### **Engagement of the Newborn and Infant in Social Interaction**

Acknowledging the paramount significance of engagement in social relationships for a child's mental development, both L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby grappled with a fundamental question: Is a person inherently born with the need for social relationships, or is it something that evolves over the course of life? This question carries profound implications, as it pertains to the essence of human nature. Cultural-historical theory and attachment theory offer contrasting responses to this question.

L.S. Vygotsky extrapolates a logical consequence from the notion of undifferentiated perception in a newborn: during this period, an infant lacks the capacity to distinguish between physical and social entities. In other words, in the first time after birth, the child cannot differentiate a person from inanimate objects and responds to individuals in a similar manner as to objects. Moreover, according to Vygotsky, the newborn fails to recognize that someone is engaging with it because it does not separate itself from the experience of the whole situation. Vygotsky contends that the behavior of a newborn is characterized by an absolute absence of any social manifestations, stating, "A newborn, as is easy to understand, does not exhibit any specific forms of social behavior" [5, p. 278]. In alignment with contemporary infancy researchers, he posits that social responses and activity directed towards another person emerge at a much later stage, noting, "We can begin to confidently discuss social impressions and reactions only during the period between the 2nd and 3rd months, i.e., beyond the neonatal stage. During this same period, the infant's social engagement is characterized by complete passivity. Neither in its behavior nor in its consciousness can we discern anything that signifies social experience as such" [ibid.]. This concept remains consistent among his followers [7–8; 14; 17]. For instance, A.N. Leontiev wrote, "Ini-

tially, the infant's attitude to the world of objects and the people around them is fused, but over time, they differentiate, forming distinct yet interrelated developmental trajectories that merge into one another" [7, p. 215]. M.I. Lisina, while delving into the ontogenesis of communication, adheres to the same viewpoint, asserting, "Our perspective asserts the gradual lifelong formation in children of a need to communicate with people around them" [8, p. 44].

As the newborn progresses into the infancy stage, its responsiveness to the "world shaped by adults" becomes increasingly pronounced [5, p. 300]. During this period, the child begins to show a wide array of social behaviors and associated emotions. Behavioral signs emerge that "unmistakably demonstrate the child's ability to distinguish between people and inanimate objects even in infancy" [ibid., p. 316–317]. In the early stage of social development, the child can merely perceive the initiatives of adults and respond to them. It's only in the second half of the first year that the child starts to develop the need for social interaction and engagement. In the pursuit of its objectives, the child discovers "...the most common and natural way through another person" [ibid., p. 302]. Over time, the adult gradually becomes the central figure within the child's perceptual world, and "the meaning of any situation for the baby is determined primarily by this central figure" [ibid.]. All of the child's activity and its attitude to the phenomena of their surroundings are shaped by its bonding with an adult, lending the impression of the child as an inherently social being.

Hence, in L.S. Vygotsky's ideas, the transition from the absence of social perception and social-oriented behavior in the neonatal period to its maximum during infancy is a gradual process. According to Vygotsky, "the exceptional nature of infant sociality primarily lies in the fact that the child's social communication has not yet detached itself from the overall interaction with the external world, inanimate objects, and the process of satisfying basic needs" [ibid.]. Notably, one of the key postulates, from the perspective of Vygotsky's subsequent theoretical constructs, is the notion of "infant helplessness." This concept underscores the child's reliance on adults as the sole means to fulfill their needs and interact with the world. This dependence propels the child's development in the direction of communication and internalization, compelling them to develop speech and acquire elements of human culture.

J. Bowlby initiates his line of reasoning regarding the sociability of infants with a resolute assertion: "When he is born, a child is far from being a tabula rasa" [3, p. 197]. He contends that a newborn's readiness to respond to social stimuli and engage in social interactions is remarkably high. He asserts that "...right from the beginning, there is a clear predisposition to react in a specific manner to certain types of stimuli typically associated with a

person: auditory from the sounds of a voice, visual from the face, tactile and kinesthetic responses from hands and body" [ibid., p. 198], and that "this sort of differentiated responses becomes evident as early as the first day after birth" [ibid., p. 204]. Bowlby elaborates on the idea that a child possesses a range of pre-established forms of behavior directed towards other individuals, such as crying, non-nutritive sucking, eye-tracking, grasping, clinging, vocal expressions, etc.

According to J. Bowlby, the presence of these pre-established behaviors in the child from the earliest days of life serves a specific, evolutionarily grounded purpose. This behavior is designed to influence the adult caregiver, which "...is likely to increase the time that the child is in close proximity to this person...", which, in turn, enhances their chances of survival, comfort, and successful development. Hence, Bowlby suggests that from birth, the child "...not only possesses a repertoire of behavior control systems ready for activation but also that each of these systems is inherently predisposed to respond to specific stimuli from a certain range (or several ranges), to be stopped by stimuli from another wide range and is strengthened or weakened by stimuli from a third" [ibid., p. 197]. These first signals from the child are not directed at any particular person; rather, they are given in accordance with the evolutionary expectation that there are people nearby for whom they are intended.

Consequently, there are several fundamental discrepancies in perspectives concerning the social needs and abilities of newborns and infants. L.S. Vygotsky does not acknowledge that newborns have, immediately or shortly after birth, the capacity to differentiate people from the environment, an active inclination for social interactions, or specialized forms of behavior directed towards others. According to him, attention towards and interest in people emerges in the age of two to three months, while active engagement in interpersonal interactions emerges after six months of age. In contrast, the proponent of attachment theory adheres to the viewpoint that newborns possess an innate, intrinsic desire for social interactions, driven by an evolutionary predisposition to differentiate people from the general background, an inherent need to actively pursue and maintain proximity to caregivers, and pre-established attachment behaviors.

### **The Nature of the Infant's Bond with a Primary Caregiver**

Both in cultural-historical psychology and in attachment theory, the individual closest to a newborn, often the child's mother, holds a unique position within the child's social environment. However, each theory presents its own perspective on the origin and

nature of these relationships and employs distinct terminology to describe their phenomenology and interpret their significance. L.S. Vygotsky employs the term “primordial we,” previously introduced by S. B. Hler, while J. Bowlby introduces the concept of “attachment.” These concepts have distinct content and conceptual orientations.

L.S. Vygotsky writes, “The initial construct arising in the child’s consciousness can be more aptly referred to as ‘Ur-wir,’ that is, ‘primordial we’” [5, p. 305]. The term “primordial we” does not seem to have a precise definition in Vygotsky’s work; he appears to give it a descriptive or even metaphorical interpretation. Nevertheless, the quote above clearly indicates that he refers to the psychological structure of “primordial we” as a mental construct rather than a behavioral one. He posits that “primordial we” emerges as the earliest and genetically primal form of a child’s consciousness and self-awareness. The child “...initially knows only a sort of ‘we’, in which ‘I’ and ‘the other’ form an integrated and cohesive structure [ibid., p. 309].

Regarding the origin of the maternal-infant bond, L.S. Vygotsky aligns with the predominant viewpoint of the psychoanalytic school at the time, which considered the social needs of the child as secondary and evolving from the satisfaction of earlier physiological needs by adults. He stated, “We can confidently assert that positive interest in a person arises from the fact that all of the child’s needs are fulfilled by adults” [ibid., p. 301]. While he acknowledges the mother’s exclusive role in the child’s “primordial we,” he doesn’t delve deeply into the specifics of the maternal-infant bond. He outlines his position in a general manner, describing the child’s relationship with the world as a derivative value stemming from its most immediate and specific relationship with an adult [ibid., p. 302]. According to E.O. Smirnova, in Vygotsky’s works, an adult is portrayed as an “abstract and formal conveyor of signs, sensory norms, intellectual operations, behavioral rules—essentially, as an intermediary between the child and culture, rather than as a living, specific individual” [14, p. 77].

As is known, M.I. Lisina later reconsidered L.S. Vygotsky’s stance on the concept of “primordial we” [8; 14]. In the “Lisina school’s” experimental investigations, it was demonstrated that during interactions with the mother, the child actively engages as a partner. The child initiates contact with the mother, seeks her attention, and responds to her, suggesting that such behavior only occurs when the child perceives a psychological separation from the communication partner and recognizes its own personality. This contrasts with Vygotsky’s belief in a state of fusion with the mother [1; 6; 8].

J. Bowlby’s scientific and psychological views initially developed within the psychoanalytic milieu. However, his explanation of the bond between an child and its mother diverges significantly from psychoanalysis. He

adopts an ethological approach, which later forms the foundation of his attachment theory. Bowlby states, “Focusing on food reinforcement has led researchers to two negative consequences: speculative theorizing, which is, of course, erroneous, and also to ignoring until recently other types of reinforcement, including those that probably play a much bigger role in the development of social attachment than food” [3, p. 201]. He posits that communication between a child and an adult constitutes one such “other” form of reinforcement. His arguments draw from experimental research and observations of children separated from their mothers. These findings reveal that, despite receiving good care and nourishment, infants who lack substantial contact with their mothers exhibit signs of depression, delays in physical, cognitive development, and speech, and are more susceptible to illness and mortality [9; 12; 19].

Nonetheless, psychoanalytic concepts are discernible in J. Bowlby’s theoretical constructs. This is particularly evident in the notion of basal anxiety, which, according to psychoanalytic theory, arises from the inherent birth trauma and permeates the child’s entire mental world and its attitude towards the surrounding world. The impetus for avoiding anxiety underpins the emergence of “attachment behavior,” whereby the child seeks to maintain close proximity to “its” adult, striving to preserve this closeness and resisting any attempts to sever it by all available means [3]. Another psychoanalytic construct significantly impacting attachment theory is the concept of object relations. It asserts that the image of the “primary object” is formed and firmly embedded in the child’s mind, making a substitution with another adult impossible without inflicting psychological trauma [15].

In both approaches, it is acknowledged that during the first months of life, the child singles out a specific person among those around it and develops a distinct bond. However, the underlying genesis of this bond is construed differently. L.S. Vygotsky attributes this bond to the fulfillment of the child’s physiological needs by adults, while attachment theory posits that it originates from the child’s innate inclination for social interaction, compounded by an emotional mechanism of anxiety in stressful situations, which manifests as “attachment behavior.”

## Results and discussion

A comparative analysis of L.S. Vygotsky and J. Bowlby’s perspectives on child mental development in the first year of life has identified both points of their similarity and disparity on several pivotal issues. They share fundamental tenets regarding the child’s early integration into a network of social connections immediately following birth and the distinct nature of the bond with

the child's primary caregiver. Nevertheless, these disparities are multifaceted and may be attributed to their reliance on different research paradigms, with one emphasizing culture-centred approach and the other adopting an evolution-centred approach.

According to L.S. Vygotsky, the newborn is immersed in its internal sensations, displaying no interest in the external world, complete passivity, and a perception of reality as an undifferentiated whole. In contrast, J. Bowlby believes that a child immediately after birth perceives and distinguishes all objects of the external world and sensory stimuli and also demonstrates selectivity towards them. L.S. Vygotsky attributes the emergence of the infant's interest in an adult to the fulfillment of its physical needs, whereas J. Bowlby contends that the child has an innate social need, distinct from other necessities. L.S. Vygotsky formulates the theoretical concept of infant helplessness, positioning it as the foundation of the social developmental context at this stage. It is this helplessness, coupled with the inability to communicate its needs to an adult due to the absence of verbal forms of expression, that generates the principal dialectical contradiction of this age. The child's subsequent development inevitably revolves around the resolution of this contradiction, achieved through the development of speech to sign mediation, internalization, and the formation of higher mental functions.

To describe the unique bond between a child and its mother (or a caregiver), the authors employ the terms "primordial we" and "attachment." The former pertains to the child's mental realm, reflecting its subjective sense of inseparability from the mother. It marks a crucial step in the development of consciousness, self-awareness, and personality. The latter pertains to evolution-based adaptive behaviors, encompassing both innate and lifelong, context-specific forms of behavior aimed at maintaining proximity to an adult for protection and care. The child's attachment is inherently personalized, and substituting a caregiver is perceived by the child as the loss of its "attachment figure," leading to suffering and psychological distress. In the theoretical constructs of L.S. Vygotsky, the mother assumes the role of a source of cultural experience and a conduit for culturally defined behavioral patterns, yet the question of her individuality and irreplaceability remains unaddressed.

During the latter half of the 20th century, a multitude of experimental psychological studies brought to light the extensive nonverbal self-expression capabilities of newborns and infants. As a rule, these abilities lead to reliable understanding and appropriate responses from adults [22]. Contemporary research has unveiled that in the first year of life, children exhibit capacities for joint attention [18], social cognition [21; 25], the creation of intermodal images [2], emotional self-regulation [28], behavioral adaptation based on prior experiences [18; 23]. It has also been demonstrated that infants can experience, express, and regulate a broad spectrum of emotions [24; 28; 29], actively explore their environment, engage in learning [2; 6; 29], communicate, and form close relationships [9; 12]. Most of the tenets of attachment theory have been empirically validated, and the theory itself continues to actively evolve [20; 23; 26–27].

Nevertheless, attachment theory does not encompass an entire realm of most important aspects of child development. J. Bowlby acknowledged, "The least studied stage of human development remains the one at which the child acquires all his specifically human qualities. Here, a whole uncharted continent lies before us" [3, p. 399]. This uncharted continent remains enigmatic in many ways. A.B. Kholmogorova, for example, articulates the point of view that despite the flourishing of contemporary neurosciences, they represent another form of biological reductionism in psychology, particularly in the realm of social relationships and social cognition, ultimately resulting in the blurring of qualitative distinctions between animals and humans [16].

In this context, the theoretical constructs of L.S. Vygotsky, anchored in the hypothesis of infant helplessness, can be viewed as an attempt to address this task. Putting forward the postulate of infant helplessness as the initial stage of development enabled him to theoretically substantiate the profound uniqueness of the path of human development. The infant's complete reliance on adults, coupled with inability to communicate its needs, determine the path of child development leading through language acquisition to conceptual thinking and the extensive assimilation of cultural elements. This framework maintains a logical consistency and leaves an indelible impression due to its profound conception. Although lacking direct empirical confirmation, it has retained its theoretical significance and relevance.

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## Using Cultural-Historical Theory to Analyze Educational Inequality: Potential, Barriers, Prospects

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The cultural-historical theory, which is basic for Soviet and post-Soviet Russian psychological science, is based on the idea of “specifically human” higher mental functions. The key concepts for the theory of “social situation of development”, “zone of proximal development” include as a central element the cooperation of the child with other people. The article shows that in the works of followers of cultural-historical theory psychology in the USSR and modern Russia, very little attention was paid to the problems of development and learning related to differences in the characteristics of the sociocultural environment and interaction with teachers and peers. Explanations of this phenomenon are offered. The examples of the development of L.S. Vygotsky’s ideas in the studies of educational inequality in foreign sociology are analyzed, the importance for Russian science of using cultural-historical theory to understand the mechanisms of the relationship between the peculiarities of social circumstances and the dynamics of child development, the analysis of pedagogical discourse is substantiated.

**Keywords:** cultural-historical activity theory, socioeconomic status, academic achievements, educational inequality, zone of proximal development.

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## Использование культурно-исторической теории для анализа образовательного неравенства: потенциал, барьеры, перспективы

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Базовая для советской и постсоветской российской психологической науки культурно-историческая теория основывается на представлении о социальной природе «специфически человеческих» высших психических функций. Ключевые для теории понятия «социальная ситуация развития», «зона ближайшего развития» включают в качестве центрального элемента сотрудничество ребенка с другими людьми. В статье показано, что, несмотря на это, в работах последователей

культурно-исторической психологии в СССР и современной России проблематике особенностей развития и обучения, связанной с различиями в характеристиках социокультурного окружения и взаимодействия с учителем и сверстниками, уделялось крайне мало внимания. Предлагаются объяснения данному феномену. Анализируются примеры развития идей Л.С. Выготского в исследованиях образовательного неравенства в зарубежной социологии, обосновывается важность для российской науки использования культурно-исторической теории для понимания механизмов взаимосвязи особенностей социальных обстоятельств и динамики развития ребенка, анализа педагогического дискурса.

**Ключевые слова:** культурно-историческая теория, социально-экономический статус, академические достижения, образовательное неравенство, зона ближайшего развития.

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## Introduction

The study of the influence of factors of the social, economic, and cultural status of students' families, the socioeconomic composition of schools on differences in learning outcomes and the emergence of the phenomenon of inequality has become one of the key areas of research in the field of education from the 1960s of the 20th century to the present [36; 42; 46].

Despite the fact that most studies relate to the fields of sociology, education, and psychology, the topic of the influence of the socioeconomic status (SES) of a family on the behavior and cognitive development of a child is at the center of attention. [19; 23; 34].

Russian psychological studies of SES and mechanisms of influence of social circumstances on the dynamics of child development are few in number [1; 19]. In turn, research in the field of education is characterized by the use of foreign sociological concepts and methods for studying the relationship of SES with the characteristics of education and child well-being [16; 24].

This seems surprising if we recall that the basic cultural-historical theory for Soviet and post-Soviet psychology had as its key thesis, starting with Vygotsky, “socio-cultural mediation of the development of higher mental functions”.

In this article, we aim to find confirmation of this phenomenon, offer its explanation and justify the possibility and prospects of using cultural and historical theory to study the problems of socio-cultural conditionality of development and learning, and to overcome educational inequality.

## The Influence of Socio-cultural Factors on the Development and Educational Success of a Child: the Potential of Cultural and Historical Theory and its Implementation in Soviet and Russian Science

L.S. Vygotsky proposed an original and profound concept of social mediation of the development of higher mental functions by cooperation with adults and signs. Its key concepts, “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) and “social situation of development” clearly showed psychologists and teachers the need to study the social environment (relationships) of the child in order to understand the processes of individual development and build adequate pedagogical practices. At the same time, Vygotsky himself did not have time to develop on this basis studies that allow us to see the social aspects of differentiation of cooperation relations and the specifics of the signs used (first of all, language) and their manifestation in the features of psychological development and educational experience of students from different social groups, although such plans seem to have existed [3]. The potential of cultural-historical theory in the analysis of social status and social relations in the family and at school for understanding the processes of development, the formation of educational inequality is recognized by modern researchers abroad [25; 28; 29; 30; 31; 33; 41].

A certain step in this direction was taken by A.R. Luria, who together with his colleagues organized pioneering empirical studies of speech and thinking features related to the social circumstances of a child's life [9]. Luria believed that “only an attempt to find out the transformative influence of a particular social historical and cultural situation on the development of behavioral processes can

give them a fairly complete understanding" [9, p. 8]. "intellectual experience is directly related to the specific features of the social situation, and here we should expect maximum conditionality of speech activity that regulates and forms a certain social context". experience from the specific environment that raised the child" [9, p. 9].

For Luria, the conclusions from the study are fundamentally important for building a fully rational pedagogical process, which he sees as "taking into account the accessibility coefficient of each stimulus used in the process of influencing the child", which "is by no means the same and stable for all ages and social groups" [9, p. 35].

At the same time, P.P. Blonsky in 1930 proposed to introduce differentiated methods of studying and combating second-handedness. The types of second-year students identified by him empirically included those whose problems were related to social circumstances, in particular, "children with a difficult social environment", "children transferred from a village school" [5].

Our analysis shows that neither Vygotsky's basic theoretical models, nor the program of empirical research for the construction of Luria's pedagogical system, nor Blonsky's proposals received continuity in the future in Soviet psychology.

The most obvious explanation for this circumstance is the change in the political situation in the country. The creation of Soviet society started the process of erasing class and social distinctions, which, on the one hand, made their research less relevant, and perhaps even contrary to political attitudes. In addition, since the state sought to take over the functions of educating (re-educating) the child (not trusting the family or compensating for the lack of its participation), it did not show interest in the influence of the family on the development and educational success of the child and even sought to exclude this influence by equalizing the power of uniformly organized education. Thus, the study of the relationship between social circumstances and development/learning did not seem to be a priority, and even directly blocked.

There is actual evidence that this topic has fallen victim to a campaign against pedagogy. Documents of the time noted that "pedologists combined with reactionary bourgeois theories that sought to prove that the intellectual abilities of bourgeois children were inherently superior to those of workers' children", using a number of "anti-scientific techniques and methods of studying children", including the study of their "ancestors". Attention was drawn "to the negative situation in children's lives." As a result, "tens of thousands of normal Soviet schoolchildren were transferred from ordinary schools to special schools for the ill-educated, to "auxiliary" schools, to "additional" and "special" classes, etc." [5].

Publications of the next period warn teachers against identifying so-called "objective" conditions as the cause of academic failure, that is, reasons that do not depend on either teachers or students, since it was these conditions that pedologists explained the failure of schoolchildren [12].

In the subsequent tradition of research in line with cultural and historical theory, including current ones, we do not find any interest, and even more so original approaches to revealing the connection between differences in the sociocultural characteristics of the child's life environment and his development and learning. As noted in the only review to date, existing Russian publications dealing with SES "mainly concern the level of concern of adolescents with problems in various spheres of life, as well as educational opportunities and the nature of child-parent relations, with the greatest attention paid to families with various variants of socio-economic disadvantage" [19, p. 74].

The topics of differences in development and inequality of academic achievements caused by SES are not highlighted in the results of the analysis of publications of the journal "Cultural-Historical Psychology" [18; 20], scientometric analysis of the cultural and historical direction in scientific publications [11].

To update our assessments of the situation, we turned to the analysis of publications over the past 5 years in psychological journals that are, on the one hand, the most authoritative in Russia, and, on the other, most representative of authors associated with the methodology of cultural and historical psychology: "Cultural-Historical Psychology", "Psychological Science and Education". We analyzed about 500 publications from 2017 to 2023. Only four publications connected differences in development, school adaptation, and academic achievement with the characteristics of the child's sociocultural living conditions, socioeconomic characteristics of his family, and peer community [7; 10; 13; 17].

In most studies of cognitive and non-cognitive development of children, and even in a number of works dealing with learning difficulties, school maladaptation, including those presenting the results of validation of the relevant measurement tools, the analysis of variables that characterize the level of education, cultural capital, income, and place of residence of families is not carried out. The features of communication styles, forms of parental participation, teachers' cooperation with the child, and the views and attitudes of children, families, and teachers towards learning are considered mainly out of connection with the social characteristics of families and schools.

As for Russian publications in the field of educational sciences, in the Soviet period and the first decades after the collapse of the USSR, this was a small number of mainly sociological works that revealed the correlation between the socioeconomic characteris-

tics of children and youth and their opportunities for higher education [15; 21; 32]. The ability to work with data from international studies of the quality of education, the Unified State Exam, as well as the first longitudinal studies have stimulated the growth of publications in recent years. That revealed the impact of SES on academic achievements and educational trajectories of students, and differences in the quality of education between groups of students and schools [16; 24]. A recent analysis of trends in the study of educational success factors in Russian science shows that the emphasis of scientific interests in this area “is shifting towards studying non-cognitive factors (predictors) that determine the academic success of students (social, socio-psychological, personal, etc.)” [16, p. 19].

Are there any reasons other than political ones that have limited the use and development of Vygotsky's ideas and cultural-historical theory in general in Russian psychology and pedagogy for studying the influence of sociocultural features of relationships and sign systems on child development? After all, they certainly should not have had a deterrent effect in the post-Soviet period.

One version of the explanation of the reasons was formulated in the work of M. Inghilleri, which correlates the approach of the outstanding British sociologist Basil Bernstein with the ideas of another British researcher and educator, James Britton [31], which were influenced by Vygotsky's works.

Both scientists developed their research in a situation of aggravation of the issue of equality of educational outcome for students from different sociocultural backgrounds in the United Kingdom. Both Britton and Bernstein defended the ideas of social factors' impact on cognitive functions, paying special attention to the role of language.

At the same time, Britton used Vygotsky's ideas on the social mediation of development, and, in particular, the idea of a ZPD with an emphasis on formative interaction. For Britton, on an individual cognitive level, all students, regardless of class/cultural background, were considered equally (in fact innately) competent, and the presence of caring adults (teachers, parents, etc.) is all that is needed to ensure successful interactive communication. Cognition and learning were considered independently of the social background reflected in the language of interaction.

In the discourse of Britton and his followers, as Inghilleri notes, “the personal growth model, however, social' simply came to mean 'interactive', and the zone of proximal development was interpreted as a site of benign interactive processes... in which a child's consciousness met a more mature adult consciousness, enabling the child to internalise gradually various forms of shared social behavior” [31, p. 474]. Thus, in the works of Britton and his followers, “Vygotsky was essentially recon-

textualised into a pedagogic theory that offered a rationalisation for language-based, interactive learning in the classroom” [31, p. 475].

Bernstein focused on the differences in the forms of language (language codes) that students acquire as a result of socialization within a particular family and/or class. Through these codes, adults convey the principles of organization of the social world(s) in which they were located, which determine the features of cognition and communication. They show different school performance due to the way the school operates and its relationships with its different communities, and thus influence is different in their educational achievements: children from working-class families show lower results. For Bernstein, the ZPD space is not a neutral place for creating or exchanging mutually interpretable meanings, and adults are not just assistants or facilitators, but to a greater or lesser extent, determinants of the formation of children's consciousness. In his view, the ZPD was “the cognitive representation of a social world, and hence the meanings as well as the ‘tools’ that were employed or made available within it — the social context of learning — would be subject to the uneven social regulation and distribution of the content and framing of the knowledge” [31, p. 475].

It seems that the course implemented by Britton and his followers, unlike Bernstein, is very similar to the trajectory of Soviet psychology after L.S. Vygotsky. The ZPD was “cleared” of any heterogeneity associated with the socio-cultural characteristics of its participants. The abstract, or rather ideal adult, replaced the real ones, and the very interest in such an adult prevailed for a long time over the interest in those real adult parents and teachers with whom the student interacts. ZPD diagnostics began to focus on artificial environments that are autonomous from real-world practices, with adults specially trained to conduct experiments or teaching within the framework of a particular variation of developing training. The design of educational practices began to rely on the understanding development of the psyche and thinking as an artificial, controlled process, and the processes of cooperation between children and adults in real socio-cultural environments were ignored [6; 25].

The way in which the real adult is replaced by the “ideal”, and the natural content of the environment and its relations by the ideal, doesn't misrepresent Vygotsky's theory, but it became its dominant interpretation. Vygotsky considered the process of development as an interaction between the primary and ideal form, where the latter is not directly revealed to the child, but is mastered with the help of its carrier or mediator, the adult, who actually acts as a supreme being and knows what and how the child should do” [2, p. 104]. And for D.B. Elkonin, as noted G.G. Kravtsova and E. E. Kravtsov, an adult is not

a specific adult (for example, a mother), but a social adult; relationships a child has with him are identified with the fundamental relationship “individual-society” [8].

### **Application of the Ideas of Cultural and Historical Theory in Modern Studies of Educational Inequality**

Now that the problem of inequality is becoming more serious, the basic ideas of cultural-historical theory continue to influence the development of modern foreign methods for investigating the relationship between schooling and social inequality, mostly using Bernstein’s approach to sociology [28; 29; 33; 37; 40; 41].

Concepts of the mediating role of adults, peers, and cultural tools, as well as the idea of a ZPD, are used to analyze teaching process in a multiethnic school environment [24], educational features and support practices used for migrant children and underrepresented groups [41], transition trajectories between different educational cultures of primary and secondary schools [27], and to analyze the educational benefits of some groups. [44]. These concepts are used for the organization of the mediative teaching for students with low-income and differentiated social relations in school [39]. It is proved that for effective work, the teacher must know the specific social dynamics of the environment children are developing in. [43].

Vadeboncoeur and Panofsky transform Vygotsky’s “dyadic conception of ZPD into a “triadic” one, where area child, a teacher, and a parent, to demonstrate that middle-class parents “insert a proleptic vision (the authors use M. Cole’s term “prolepsis”) for their children’s future in the ZPD” [45, p.194]. Using the communicative capital (speech genres of advocacy, the social language of educational professionals, the discourse of parental involvement) they purposefully mediate its implementation in the student-teacher relationship, helping teachers to see the child’s capabilities and creating the necessary resources for educational experience. In turn, the low communication capital of parents from low-income families does not allow them to be effective in solving this problem [45].

### **Conclusion**

The key tenets of the cultural-historical theory, described in the works of L.S. Vygotsky, define the social as a source of development of higher mental functions. At the same time, differences in the social environment, socio-cultural characteristics of adults and peers, were not specifically considered in the works of followers of the cultural-historical theory as factors of differences in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive processes, as predictors of educational failure.

And, if in the Soviet period it can be to some extent explained by the political context, then ignoring this issue during fast growing socio-economic inequality in the late 20th and first quarter of the 21st century, can no longer be explained by this.

In this study we show that the reasons for this are related to certain aspects of the cultural-historical theory itself, how it was presented in the works of L.S. Vygotsky and were later consolidated. This is, first of all, the interpretation of the adult mediator as an abstract carrier of the ideal form and a controller of the development of this ideal form providing ZPD. The practices of cooperation between adults, peers and children that determine the value of ZPD were considered operationally without sufficient attention being paid to socio-cultural features and characteristics of dispositions at the micro level. Another limitation is the insufficiently researched problem of language features in various socio-cultural environments and communication practices as a source of differences in cognitive development and educational achievements.

Actualization of the problem of educational inequality in Russia has stimulated the emergence of Russian studies of this phenomenon. However, they are already based on foreign theories and methods of study, and those traditions that are least connected with Vygotsky’s ideas.

It seems that the ideas of cultural-historical theory can become an important basis for Russian own tradition of studying the influence of socio-cultural factors on the development and education of children and designing educational models that open up opportunities, so every child could get a high quality education.

In particular, the idea of a ZPD can be used as a tool for operationalizing the concept of “fair education” in institutional and pedagogical practices, so that the realization of educational potential will be not the result of personal and social conditions [54]. In this case, the formation of a ZPD can be considered as the realization of high expectations about the achievements of children through children’s integration/remediation and socialization in various socio-cultural environments (first of all, families).

The idea of ZPD can be used to analyze the phenomenon of academic resilience, the ability of schoolchildren from families with low economic, educational and cultural resources to overcome these limitations, achieving the highest results in achievement tests [38].

If we are talking about for improving educational opportunities for students from low-resource groups, it’s important to focus on the study of students’ collaboration. However, for this to be useful for all students, we need to understand the characteristics of cultural and social groups and the dynamics of group interaction.

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# Problems of Creativity Development Methodology in Educational Practice

## (About one of the Examples of Contradictions in the Modern System of Education)

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The article reflects the contradictions that characterize the current state of Russian education system. It is believed that the abolition of the Bologna system of education will contribute to the restoration of its former high level. However, the material we have cited from a survey of leading teachers points to deeper reasons for its decline. First of all, it should be noted the orientation towards the introduction into pedagogy of a system of basic indicators of child development seen as a part of the dominant American concept of behaviorism, which explains the development of the cognitive process and creativity tvorchestvo – in Russian only by an associative process. Studies, presentations at the conferences, and a survey the author conducted among Russian teachers show that, assuming a higher role in the development of “creativity” than in the development of tvorchestvo or “creative skills”, teachers actually form among students a significant attitude towards creativity. The concepts of tvorchestvo and “creativity”, unfortunately, are considered the same thing in the scientific world. Confusing these concepts, a professional Russian teacher contradicts the scientifically based Russian methodology, which is a decisive factor in the development of education in Russia.

**Keywords:** theory, practice, education, educational program, non-standard thinking, creative abilities, creativity.

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# Проблемы методологии развития творчества в практике образования

## (Об одном из примеров противоречий в современной системе образования)

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В статье отражены противоречия, характеризующие современное состояние отечественной системы образования. Считается, что отмена Болонской системы образования позволит способствовать восстановлению прежнего высокого ее уровня. Однако приведенный нами материал опроса передовых учителей указывает на более глубокие причины ее упадка. В первую очередь, следует отметить ориентацию на внедрение в педагогику системы основных показателей развития ребенка, разработанных в доминирующей в Америке концепции бихевиоризма, сводящего развитие познавательного процесса и творчества (креативности) лишь к ассоциативному процессу. Примеры отождествления учителями понятий творчества и креативности (по Дж. Гилфорду) в докладах на ряде

конференций и по результатам проведенного автором опроса демонстрируют, что, предполагая более высокую роль в развитии «креативности», чем «творческих способностей», педагоги фактически формируют у школьников значимое отношение к этому понятию. Наивно веря в тождественность понятий «творчество» и «креативность», что, к сожалению, усиливает уже сложившаяся традиция и в научном мире, профессиональный педагог фактически противоречит научно обоснованной отечественной методологии как решающего фактора развития российского образования.

**Ключевые слова:** теория, методология, практика, образование, программа, нестандартное мышление, творческие способности, креативность.

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## Introduction

The article is aimed at discussing the contradictions between the real educational practice of modern Russia and the prospects for the educational policy of the national system of teacher education: the social need for a unified strategy for planning and developing educational programs of pedagogical universities in the current areas of teacher training of the future. One of the priority areas in the field of education is the development of *tvorchestvo* in all areas of activity.

The need to solve this problem requires a scientifically based approach that ensures the effectiveness of pedagogical practice. However, real examples of everyday understanding of creativity and creativity in the reports of leading teachers at a number of modern scientific and practical conferences prompted us to conduct a survey of teachers from different regions of the country. The survey offered an answer to 2 questions: 1. What pedagogical technologies are your priority? 2. Describe how you understand the correlation between the concepts of “*tvorchestvo*” and “creativity”.

The article provides the most complete and characteristic answers to our questions.

## Practice without theory

*Respondent 1. Question 1.* Creating an educational environment for elementary school students is a necessary condition for the development of students' intellectual abilities. It is in elementary school that the basis for the formation of skills and abilities of students is laid. It is based on an approach that promotes the ability of students to set educational and individual goals. This approach can be considered on the example of a collective creative process. It develops the creative abilities of students, their creative skills, non-standard thinking.

*Question 2.* To determine the creative abilities of elementary school students, we consider the following features important: 1. how quickly a child can complete

a task, how many solutions can be offered to students; whether the answers are different or the same; 2. originality of thought (the answer is evaluated in comparison with the answers of other students). As for the definition of creativity, we leave the consideration and study of this issue to ourselves for the future. In our work, we rely on the work of the author, who defended his Ph.D. thesis on this topic.

*Respondent 2. Question 1.* Work to involve younger students in research activities. We have developed a course to expand students' understanding of the role of experiment, modeling and research in physics. The tasks of forming a stable understanding of the importance of a physical experiment among students, as well as demonstrating to students that experimental work is a criterion for the truth of the knowledge gained by means of revealing their practical application are set. The course contributes to the development of interest in the study of physics in their free time from studies. The two main directions are solving Olympiad problems and writing project work. To perform these activities, the student must apply creative, non-standard thinking. From here, students increase self-esteem, develop creative abilities, creative skills, and communication.

*Question 2.* Creativity is the ability to express yourself in the performance of tasks.

*Respondent 3. Question 1.* Development of cognitive interest among students. It is important that a modern graduate, in addition to mastering a set of knowledge, be able to easily apply them in real life situations, have creative potential, and be able to think outside the box. One of the goals of the teacher is the intellectual education of schoolchildren, which includes the development of cognitive interest, the development of critical thinking. Thus, special attention is paid to the formation and development of cognitive interest in classroom and extracurricular activities, since it is he who is the stimulus for successful learning. An important task of the teacher is to interest the child, to involve him in scientific activities.

*Question 2.* It is necessary to develop students' critical and creative thinking, which are associated with a

number of skills and abilities: the ability to plan activities, choosing the most successful way to solve a problem, analyze, process the information provided and express their point of view about what they heard, read (in such In this case, creative project work on the consciousness of communities in the VC, which we use, is connected precisely with the processing of information). Compilation of reviews in the format of video advertising, discussions, round tables encourage you to argue your point of view. Among other things, it seems that the tasks in question, one way or another, set the child the task of finding a solution on their own. This is a kind of “challenge” that requires not a mechanical reproduction of what has been memorized, but a processing of the information provided. Therefore, creativity is the ability to solve tasks in a non-standard way in everyday life. This is due to the imagination, which helps to find a way out of various situations, both educational and everyday. It is rather difficult to separate from the concept of creativity, in my opinion, these are related concepts. I will consider this issue further.

*Respondent 4. Question 1.* The key element of the modernization of the Russian school is the federal state educational standard, which imposes a requirement on the organization of research activities of schoolchildren as an effective method of developing the ability of students to independently acquire new knowledge. To prepare a research work with a child, the teacher uses the method of developing creative thinking as one of the components of functional literacy. Research work at school is one of the stages in the development of a student’s creative thinking. It is important for the teacher to make it clear to the child that the subjects provide basic knowledge. But there is always the opportunity to expand and deepen them with the help of research activities.

*Question 2:* Creative thinking is a component of functional literacy, which is commonly understood as the ability of a person to use his thinking and imagination to develop and improve ideas, form new knowledge, solve problems, etc.

Thinking is a socially conditioned mental process, inextricably linked with speech, of searching for and discovering something new, i.e. the process of generalized and indirect reflection of reality in the course of analysis and synthesis. While creative thinking is the ability of a person to use his thinking and imagination to develop and improve ideas, form new knowledge, and solve problems. The development of creative thinking is necessary for research activities. A non-standard way of thinking and reasoning of the phased course of research work is the development of creative thinking. Creativity combines the two characteristics of intelligence plus imagination to form conclusions based on the information received. For example, when studying the topic of leaf fall, synthesis and analysis are sufficient to explain the men-

tal process of thinking: understanding the phenomenon of leaf fall and at what time of the year it occurs. Perhaps additional literature that will expand this concept. For creative thinking, imagination is already connected: what if we follow the process of leaf fall, what conditions are necessary for it, how it can be tracked and recorded. When kids say “I have an idea!” This is what creative thinking is. That is, the child, by connecting imagination and intellect, offers new, unusual, non-standard ways of knowing the world around him. Creative thinking is a component of functional literacy, which is usually understood as the ability of a person to use his thinking and imagination to develop and improve ideas, form new knowledge, solve problems, etc.

*Respondent 5. Question 1.* Support for gifted children. The group of gifted children can include students who: have higher intellectual abilities, susceptibility to learning, creativity and manifestations compared to the majority of other peers. A gifted child is characterized by an insatiable cognitive need; they experience the joy of mental labor; they are characterized by a high rate of development of the intellectual and creative spheres, depth and unconventional thinking, the ability to think and analyze outside the box, the desire to work hard, responsibility, independence and purposefulness. I.G. Pestalozzi said that “... my students will not learn new things from me, they will discover this new thing themselves. My main task is to help them open up, develop their own ideas.” This can be seen as the main task in working with gifted children.

*Question 2:* Think outside the box. Have your own solution. Neither according to a template, nor according to an algorithm, but its own. Even if the program is higher.

*Respondent 6. Question 1.* The relevance of the development of the cognitive interest of students. It lies in the fact that, according to federal educational standards, it is necessary to form in students the ability to learn — a basic skill for their further development. Modern education sets itself the task of preparing a graduate who, in addition to mastering a set of knowledge, will easily apply them in real life situations, have creative potential, be able to think outside the box, show their creative abilities and intellectual and cognitive skills and critical thinking.

*Question 2:* The creative abilities of students stand out, first of all, when performing various types of tasks. This can be seen when, instead of the traditional table, the child makes a mental map. Creativity is a somewhat different concept in our understanding. It is the student’s ability to answer a question in such a way that he completely breaks out of the mold. Or, more importantly, ask a question that will require the search for additional information, discussion, brainstorming. In modern society, both of these qualities are very important, so in our activities we make efforts to further

develop them. I gave the mental map in this example as an example of a child's creative approach to a task in which this type of work was not mandatory — i.e. a sample was not given, a qualitatively new product was produced from standard elements. Naturally, everyone can cope with it, if the teacher sets such a goal. I do not undertake to independently draw a conclusion about the differentiation of creativity and creative abilities, because this is not my subject area and I will not be able to professionally and methodically competently approach this issue. In my reasoning, I rely on the studied works of modern researchers, including when writing our article. The questions I have listed can be solved through creativity, flexibility of thinking, imagination, but in any case, one of the tasks of the teacher is to develop this in children. I will continue to study and find answers to your questions.

*Respondent 7. Question 1.* Using the example of the implementation of the Smart Holidays program, we focus on the fact that the formation of functional literacy in primary school is one of the most important issues in the development of our education. Educational standards consider functional literacy as the ability to solve various life situations. Functional literacy includes global competencies and creative, out-of-the-box thinking. Creative and critical thinking is the ability of a child to independently or in a team come up with and improve ideas. For a person who wants to be successful, it is most important to have leadership qualities, non-standard thinking, strive for self-improvement. And here a serious problem arises, how to lay the foundations of this literacy, with the help of what pedagogical technologies, techniques, methods, how to educate a functionally literate person. The Smart Holidays project provides more opportunities for students to apply the knowledge gained in practice, which contributes to the development of functional literacy components in them. In the extracurricular activities of the project, story games were effectively used. Children felt responsible for their actions in the game, which will help them avoid mistakes in adulthood. The conducted classes developed in children the ability to think creatively, communicate, work in a team, and lead groups.

*Question 2.* Creativity is the ability to create something new, non-standard, different from the usual. This quality distinguishes a good specialist from an ordinary employee who performs the assigned tasks. Creative thinking is the ability of a person to use his imagination to develop and improve ideas, form new knowledge, and solve problems that he has not encountered before. Creative thinking is the process of creating something new by combining and interweaving different areas of knowledge. Creativity makes the process of thinking exciting and helps to find new solutions to old life problems. Creative thinking is one of the components of functional literacy. Functional literacy is aimed at creative, open

thinking, finding non-standard ways to solve problems, based on existing knowledge and the ability to extract the missing information on your own. In other words, creative thinking is the ability to look at things from a unique perspective, notice patterns that are not obvious, approach life's problems in an unconventional way, and use knowledge and imagination to accomplish these tasks. Creative thinking makes it possible to make non-standard decisions, bypassing any algorithms or common sense. It assumes that several answers can be given to one question, which is the condition for the birth of original ideas and self-expression of the individual. Creative thinking helps you respond faster to tasks, skillfully get out of difficult situations, live out of a pattern and create interesting ideas. People with creative thinking are able to think outside the box and find non-standard solutions for standard situations. To have non-standard thinking means to be able to find new approaches and unusual solutions in any situation, to see the world differently than most people. Non-standard thinkers have originality of thinking and intuitively look for unusual solutions to problems, not adhering to previously known rules and patterns. The development of non-standard thinking, creative abilities of students is facilitated by design and research activities, since as a result a new product appears.

Thus, according to the majority of teachers surveyed, it is not productive thinking, but the ability to solve problems in a non-standard way — creativity — helps the student find a solution, sometimes bypassing the cultural method and common sense.

At the same time, a number of educators openly admit to the conditional use of this term: “As for the definition of creativity, we leave the consideration and study of this issue for ourselves in the future”, or: “I do not undertake to independently draw a conclusion about the differentiation of creativity and creative abilities, this not my subject area. I will not be able to professionally and methodically competently approach this issue. In my reasoning, I rely on the work of modern researchers”.

From this it follows that the idea of a scientific classification of the basic psychological concepts of human cognitive activity, such as intelligence, thinking, creative abilities, creativity, causes some difficulty for practitioners, since they are ambiguously disclosed in the reports presented. This requires an appeal to the theoretical foundations for the development of these concepts.

### **From theory to practice**

1. *From the history of the issue.* The development of the concept of “creativity” has a long history, but the development of the concept of “creativity” in the 50s is

fundamental for the issue under consideration. of the last century, the problems of creativity by the American psychologist J. Guilford [12, 23, 24].

The crisis that arose in the middle of the last century in the United States required the identification of people capable of creativity. However, a century of testing creativity on IQ tests has proven that they do not reveal the ability to be creative, even if they have extremely high scores. Consequently, giftedness, understood since the Renaissance as the height of abilities, does not characterize creative potential. This forced the American scientist J. Guilford to include in the testing system a special indicator of creativity Cr (literally – creativity), in contrast to the indicator of intelligence. Noting that divergent thinking, as the main indicator of creativity, “acts wherever trial and error thinking takes place” [12, p. 442], he notes that ignoring the most valuable qualities of creativity is due to the fact that most of the research went within the framework of behaviorism, in which studies of learning were carried out on animals: “*Tvorchestvo* is difficult to observe from the hill of behaviorism, since insight is rarely found in animals” [12, p. 443].

The courage of the scientist allows him to fix the inconsistency of this position. However, the theory of J. Guildford remains within the framework of behaviorism [7].

2. *Author's approach.* As a theoretical basis for our research, we consider the approach of an unsurpassed scientific authority – the philosopher G. Hegel. For the first time, he considered the concept of development not on the basis of growth, but on a qualitative change. The contradiction allows development to occur not in a vicious circle, but progressively – from lower forms to higher ones. The level of the individual, the particular, the universal acts as these forms. In Hegel's system, the whole is considered as a unity of contradictions [11]. Hence the “unit of analysis” L.S. Vygotsky as the unity of “affect and intellect” [10]. Hegel substantiated this scheme of self-development primarily on the material of the historical development of various spheres of spiritual culture (philosophy, religion, art).

Trying to prove his commitment to Marxism, L.S. Vygotsky explores the “unit” singled out by K. Marx and goes to the original position of G. Hegel. In his appeal to a psychology that wants to study complex unities, Vygotsky demands that the methods of decomposition into elements be replaced by methods of analysis that single out units [10, p. 29], which finally provides a way of re-

vealing the nature of creativity no longer by the product, but by its very mechanism. Hence the “unit of analysis” L.S. Vygotsky as a unity of “affect and intellect” [10]. The evidence that the actions of the mind, its direction are determined by the personality, was generalized by L.S. Vygotsky: “Whoever tore off thinking from the very beginning from affect, he forever closed his way to explaining the causes of thinking itself” [Vygotsky L.S., 2019, p. 11]. magazine[6] we gave a detailed analysis of the formation of the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky.

However, the described process does not yet go beyond productive thinking and the presence of a dominant. Outside remained phenomena of “spontaneous” discoveries. This fact was not reflected by scientists, since within the framework of the method of problem situations, the psychologist could not observe a process other than that associated with the solution of the tasks set. Because of this, the motive of achievement is the leading motivation (it is the highest in Atkinson's structure).

Unlike Gestalt psychologists<sup>1</sup> [9], who introduced the method of solving problem situations into the study of the thinking process, having overcome the method of associations (which was creatively developed in Russian psychology by the schools of S.L. Rubinshtein and A.N. Leontiev [4; 16; 17; 18]), we succeeded to develop the “Creative field”<sup>2</sup> method [2; 3; 5; 6]. This method made it possible to fix not only the process of solving the tasks presented, but to diagnose the entire process of activity. The levels singled out using this method coincide with the levels singled out by Hegel. The unit level corresponds to the level “stimulus-productive” – a given activity to solve specific problems. The data obtained at this level make it possible to judge the level of intelligence according to all the learning parameters identified by Z.I. Kalmykova and N.I. Menchinskaya [14]. If the work of the subject takes place only within the framework of solving the tasks presented, then with varying degrees of success, including highly successful, we attribute it to the stimulus-productive level. This is activity at the individual level.

The level of the special corresponds to the “heuristic” level. This is a deep layer, masked by the “outer” layer and not obvious to the subject, this is the activity of revealing hidden patterns that the entire system of tasks contains, the discovery of which is not required to solve them. Here the person goes beyond the initial requirements. On this basis, we attribute it to the heuristic level and state that it has the ability to be cre-

<sup>1</sup> The protest against the reproduction of associationism as the first direction of psychology as an independent science led to the design at the beginning of the 20th century two directions: Gestalt psychology, which left the phenomena of consciousness as the subject of psychology, but replaced the process of associations with the process of thinking, and behaviorism, in which the subject of psychology was replaced by behavior and the method of associations remained.

<sup>2</sup> In 1969, the term “creativity”, used at that time only by journalists, was perceived as a synonym for the concept of creativity.

ative, i.e. giftedness. It is always expressed, to varying degrees, emotionally.

The level of the universal corresponds to the “creative” level – the level of theory construction. An independently found empirical regularity can not be used only as a solution, but acts as a new problem. The patterns found are subject to proof. This is the level of posing new problems and building theories. Here, the analysis is carried out at the level of the general, providing knowledge of the essence of the object.

Enthusiasm, preoccupation with activity leads to the fact that the process does not stop even when the initial task is completed. What a person does with love, he constantly improves, realizing all the new ideas born in the process of the work itself, i.e. exhibits self-awareness. As a result, the new product of his activity significantly exceeds the original plan. In this exit into the “unpredictable”, the ability to continue cognition beyond the requirements of a given situation, in an action that loses the form of a response, lies the secret of the highest forms of creativity. At this level, giftedness cannot be determined only by the level of development of abilities [22]. The intellect in this unity ensures the successful mastering of the activity, and cognitive motivation ensures its further development. The specific ratio of these factors is determined in the process of their integration. The intelligence of subjects can be equal at all levels as shown in different dimensions, but they are distinguished by dominant motivation<sup>3</sup> [3].

## Conclusion

The introduction of the methodology of bioheviarism into our education system in the 90s, in our opinion, explains the observed terminological confusion in the minds of teachers. The attitude to the term “creativity” by J. Guilford as an indicator of creativity, in contrast to an indicator of intelligence, is also facilitated by its translation into Russian as “*tvorchestvo*”. Hence the logical answer is that creativity and creativity are related concepts.

On the one hand, “creativity is the ability to create something new, non-standard, different from the usual”; “Creativity is extraordinary. This is a different vision, a different perception”.

On the other hand, “creative thinking is the ability of a person to use his imagination to develop and improve ideas, form new knowledge, solve problems that he has not encountered before, or it is the ability to solve tasks in a non-standard way.”

Thus, teachers in matters of developing students’ ability to be creative began to appeal to the concept of creativity as a specific ability (according to Guilford) and a panacea that ensures academic and life success.

Against the background of professionally built training programs, the absence of the concept of “productive thinking” among teachers is striking.

It is also significant that in the scientific literature using the term “creativity” there is no mention of the methodology of behaviorism, there is no understanding that this indicator is associated with the mechanism of associations, and the sign of originality in its everyday interpretation dominates in the minds of practitioners. In fact, creativity is considered as the highest productive process, due to the joint action of intellect and imagination.

But if we talk about the nature of the thought process not within the framework of behaviorism, but in the world scientific methodology, then the mechanism of creativity and the role of imagination in it were described in Soviet psychology within the framework of the school of S.L. Rubinshtein [4] and further confirmed in subsequent works of major domestic experts: N.I. Zhinkin, D.B. Elkonin, V.T. Kudryavtsev and others (see, for example, [15]). The consideration of figurative-spatial figures outside of thinking is also criticized by L.M. [8].

We find similar positions on the role of imagination in the process of thinking and creativity in world psychology. Thus, M. Heidegger writes that “the hidden unity of vision (imagination) and hearing determines the essence of thinking” [20]. R. Arnheim writes about visual thinking [1]. G. Hunt subtly formulated this unity as a “perceived meaning” [21]. He explains it by the role of “intermodal translation” implemented by the new cortex in humans.

The lack of a clear differentiation between productive thinking as a means of solving problem situations and the process of creativity in Russian psychology (since the productive process was limited only to solving problem situations) led to the fact that even in highly professional and scientific works, and in educational practice, problem solving is interpreted as creative thinking [13].

Naively believing in the contiguity of the concepts of “*tvorchestvo*” and “creativity” (in the understanding of J. Guilford), which, unfortunately, strengthens the already established tradition in the scientific world, a professional teacher actually contradicts the scientifically based methodology as a decisive factor in the development of Russian education.

<sup>3</sup> Here I would like to recall the theory of “kaleidoscopism” by V. Frankl, who wrote that in order to see the world, one must forget about oneself [19].

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# Modern and Historical Parallels of Perception of Anomie in Armenian Society

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The characteristics of perception of anomie are revealed both in modern societies and in the historical past. Although the psychological phenomenon of anomie is expressed in thinking specific for various historical periods, the study of historical and modern parallels allows us to see some models of the development of psychological scientific thought and perception of anomie. Anomie is presented as a psychological pattern of perception with certain characteristics such as social apathy, emotional burnout, alienation, normlessness, social isolation and others. The variety of causes and manifestations of anomie requires the search for new ways and strategies for studying human activity and motivation, which will not only reduce the risks of social apathy, but also adapt the individual to the conditions of rapidly changing social processes. In order to do it it is necessary to study the relationship between the various components of perception of anomie and compare modern anomie issues with historical parallels. The identification of modern and historical parallels in the development of the phenomenon of anomie shows the changes of perception of socio-psychological well-being and worldview. In the methodological sense, the comparative method of the investigation of the perception of anomie allows us to reveal and highlight the historical basis of human worldview.

**Keywords:** perception, anomie, social apathy, emotional burnout, normlessness .

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# Современные и исторические параллели восприятия аномии в армянском обществе

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В статье представлены характеристики восприятия аномии, как в современных обществах, так и в историческом прошлом. Психологическое явление аномии выражено в типе мышления, специфичном для различных исторических периодов, следовательно, изучение исторических и современных параллелей позволяет нам увидеть некоторые модели развития психологической научной мысли и восприятия аномии. Аномия представлена как психологическая модель восприятия с определенными характеристиками, такими как социальная апатия, эмоциональное выгорание, отчуждение, безнормность, социальная изоляция и др. Разнообразие причин и проявлений аномии требует поиска новых способов и стратегий для изучения человеческой деятельности и мотивации, что не только снизит риски социальной апатии, но и адаптирует человека к условиям быстро меняющихся социальных процессов. В связи с этим необходимо изучить различные компоненты восприятия аномии в сравнении современного состояния изучения проблемы аномии и исторических параллелей. Идентификация современных и исторических параллелей в развитии явления аномии показывает, как изменяется восприятие социально-психологического благополучия и мировоззрения. В методологическом смысле сравнительный метод исследования восприятия аномии позволяет нам выявить историческую основу человеческого мировоззрения, подчеркнуть ее значимость.

**Ключевые слова:** восприятие, аномия, социальная апатия, эмоциональное выгорание, безнормность.

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## Introduction

Anomie is one of the topical issues discussed in the contemporary scientific literature [15; 21; 24; 33]. Anomie being mostly studied in sociological researches is mainly characterized by absence or uncontrollability of social norms. The purpose of this article is to discuss the phenomenon of anomie in the works of medieval Armenian philosophers and to analyze parallels in the development trends of modern psychological science. As many authors note, various factors may affect the anomie [2; 6; 10; 14; 19; 20]. This article describes such factors as apathy and emotional burnout that may accompany the expression of anomie. The phenomenon of apathy is ac-

tively explored by modern social science, where it is seen as an integral part of postmodern society. According to some scientists, in a developed industrial society, apathy manifests itself through indifference, lack of purpose and meaning in life. Moreover, apathy is a special form of social protest, both as a way of adapting to the surrounding reality, and as a special kind of socialization, and as a synonym not only for tolerance, but also for indifference [16; 17; 36; 43; 44]. However, apathy remains insufficiently explored in the Armenian scientific literature, and is mainly considered in the context of studies on the phenomenon of anomie. Social apathy or indifference is a term used in the field of psychology to describe a mental state in which an individual exhibits a lack of emo-

tion and motivation for social activity. In the modern scientific literature, studies devoted to the concepts of “apathy”, “social apathy” are interdisciplinary and comprehensive [36; 43].

The relevance of the study of the phenomenon of apathy is primarily due to those fundamental, socio-economic, legal and political processes that occur in the modern world, in the context of globalization, the center of which is a person with his inner world and common problems. In modern society, the manifestation of apathy is multidimensional. Apathy can appear as a person’s adaptation to reality, or as a form of protest, and sometimes as a unique form of socialization. In some cases, apathy is a sign of alienation of the individual from society [16].

The other factor that may accompany anomie perception is the emotional burnout. According to V. Kuzmenkov, apathy and emotional burnout factors have tremendous impact on the anomie of personality [22]. Thus, in social philosophy, the alienation of the individual reveals as the inability to realize oneself in society, to feel part of something big and important generates a sense of the meaninglessness of life and the uselessness of observing social norms [3]. It should be noted, that H.J. Freudenberg is the founder of research on the psychological state of a person who, by the nature of his professional activity, constantly enters into an active dialogue with clients and provides them with professional assistance. He was the first to introduce the term “staff burnout” into professional literature and revealed the concept of emotional burnout. According to H. J. Freudenberger, emotional burnout is a gradual loss of emotional, cognitive and physical energy by a person, which entail symptoms of emotional and mental exhaustion, often physical fatigue, personal detachment and lack of satisfaction with the work performed [5].

Moreover, H.J. Freudenberg emphasized the fact that emotional burnout is also a negative state of a person developing in working conditions, which leads to mental and emotional exhaustion of the individual [5]. In its turn, C. Maslach describes burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do “people-work” of some kind. According to C. Maslach, a key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion [27].

In Russian studies, this phenomenon was first characterized in the works of B.G. Ananyev and was interpreted as a negative condition that occurs only in people whose professional activities are closely related to interpersonal relationships (“man-to-man”) [35].

It is noteworthy, that in 2022, the World Health Organization has updated the definition of burnout syndrome. According to this definition: “Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. Burnout refers specifically to phenomenon of anomie in the occupational context and

should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life” [41].

According to the approach of N.E. Vodopyanova, E.S. Starchenkova, if a specialist is involved in activities that differ in duration and special emotional stress, and cause exhaustion in emotional and mental terms, then he is the most prone to professional burnout, which further affects all spheres of human life [42, p. 24–31]. In its turn, professional burnout is a consequence of changes in value orientations and the meaning of personal life. Moreover, the value of self-actualization is seen as obvious: freedom of self-expression, the right to one’s own choice and one’s own life were in tune with the moods of their time and the ideals of various nonconformist movements.

It is obvious that professional burnout is directly related to the professional stress of the individual, due to which both emotional and energy resources of a person are depleted. So, negative emotions accumulate, which are suppressed, but do not find a way out, thereby not allowing the professional not only to be fully realized, but also to be in a normal emotional state [8; 16].

## Historical Background

Historical parallels of perception of this phenomenon lead us to the term “apathy” which comes from the Greek “apatheia” and means absence of feeling, insensitivity, passionless. In the development of philosophy, the term “apathy” does not carry a negative meaning. Thus, this term originally used by the Stoics to signify a condition of being totally free from the pathos, emotions and passions such as pain, fear, desire, and pleasure [7]. Stoics (Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus) understood apathy as an essential property of a virtuous state (wisdom), as a positive ability to overcome the effects that arise as a result of an erroneous assessment of “external” things. In the works of the late Stoics, such as Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, apathy is considered as the ability to dominate oneself, is a sign of wisdom, a peculiar way of adapting to the surrounding reality, chosen by a person, however, out of a sense of hopelessness [7].

From the early middle ages, Armenian theologians and philosophers were interested in the issues of studying the essence of man, his spiritual needs. The main expressions of human life in society were considered as the manifestations of apathy to bodily needs and reflective nature of man. Speaking about the development of ancient thought of apathy, it is necessary to imagine the legacy of David Anhaght (Invincible) (end of the 5<sup>th</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century), an Armenian philosopher, a representative of Neoplatonism. He created a system of logic, expressed a number of ideas in astronomy and mathematics, opposed skepticism and relativism. Considering philosophy alternately as the science of being, the science of divine and human things, as thoughts of death, “imitation of God, committed to the best of human forces”, David Anhaght considered the liberation of the soul from the “dungeon” of the body as an important goal [4, p. 149; 13, p. 140;]. The influence of Aristotle is especially noticeable in the theory of knowledge

of David Anhaght. In the “Definitions of Philosophy” David Anhaght opposes skepticism and relativism, for the effectiveness of the philosophy comprehension of the world. The purpose of philosophy, according to David Anhaght, is the search and indication of ways to avoid evil in order to achieve spiritual perfection. Knowledge is not an end in itself; it should serve as a moral exaltation of a person. In the teaching about the soul, David Anhaght developed Neoplatonism ideas; his logical constructions include dialectical ideas of influence of apathy into body needs and expressions. The system of David Anhaght introduced a secular, rationalist principle to the Armenian medieval philosophy associated with theology. [32, p. 234–235].

It is no secret that David Anhaght’s works are still relevant today. Although the ideas of the Armenian genius have been repeatedly studied, psychological and cultural aspects of his works have not been sufficiently analyzed. Meanwhile, the comparative and psychological analysis of David Anhaght’s scientific heritage gives us not only an idea of the spirit of his time, the linguistic thinking, but it also introduces the ideas of the famous Armenian philosophy to theoretical psychotherapy.

It is necessary to highlight the importance of the ideas of David Anhaght in the world’s recognition and worldview process. In particular, the subordination of idealistic ideas and the objective reflection of the world was the basis for the formation of further moral and socio-legal norms and the development of Armenian scientific thinking. “Border Wisdom” and “Commentary Analytical Aristotle” are the vivid examples of structuring medieval written speech in attempt to present judgments about the world in the form of definitions. Not only the linguistic features of the cognition theories can be found there, but also the national grounds for linguistic terminology can be created.

David Anhaght ideas about mental phenomenon are extremely important when topics such as the continuity of life are explained not only by God’s existence, but also through personal qualities, character, emotional world and language thinking. This is where the Armenian philosopher comes to the language and logical idea of the “elementary system”, to the development of a person’s ability and worldview. David highlights, that an anomic (or chaotic) perception of the world is a result of the atomization of a phenomenon, i.e. one should be able to describe a phenomenon or a concept by describing its parts. The better one can verbally describe a concept by describing its elements, the more ordered are his thoughts. The understanding of analysis and synthesis is practically based on the medieval understanding of anomie. It was not only an attempt to describe abstract thinking, but also the methodological approaches to the theoretical and further psychological thought, as the methodological components of the analysis of the mental vocabulary.

It is impossible to study the national roots of psycholinguistics without analyzing the psychological aspects of Grigor Narekatsi’s (circa 950–1003) philosophical and cultural heritage. It is no secret that Grigor Narekatsi’s popular work, the poem “Book of Lamentations” has

gained great popularity in both his contemporary and modern societies, often bearing the name “Narek”. Researches about the psychological impact of “Narek” have different emphases, but we think it’s important to refer it to the perception of anomie.

In the history of literature, Narekatsi was the first to use a lot of alliteration, which gives a special sound to the entire poem. The use of that method had a great psychological impact and was widely used by later poets [32, p. 409–410; 34; 40, p. 45–55]. Such skillful use of consonants certainly had an art-therapeutic significance as well combining poetic and musical elements in one work to emphasize the idea that the author wanted to convey to the reader. It should also be noted that during the psychological experimental research containing elements of art-therapeutic mental healing, which was carried out by us in order to reveal the reflection, discharge and self-esteem of the person, after reading Narekatsi’s Book, the test subjects said that they understood the poem in a different way or in a new way. Often the subject’s response took on an imperative to interpret the poem, to valorize it with manifestations of “copyright”. These results undoubtedly testify the strong psychotherapeutic potential of the poem, the systemic possibility of influencing the inner world of a person. Data on affective consistency were collected with the help of content analysis, comparing individuals’ verbal responses and evaluations of the poem. As a result, the fact of listening to the poem was interpreted not only as “I read the poem” but also as “I heard it”, “I enjoyed it”, “I heard it like a song”, “I had different feelings at the same time”, “I saw colors imagined” and so on. We can state that the art-therapeutic effect of Narekatsi’s poem is due to the simultaneous activation of different senses, the formation of a new perception as a result of their combination, when ordinary words seem to convey a new type of information, and sounds heard like a melody acquire new word meanings. It is no coincidence that Manuk Abeghyan considered Narekatsi to be the first psychiatrist, and his poem was the first book on psychiatry [1, p. 121; 351].

Another feature of the art-therapeutic effect of Grigor Narekatsi’s works is the reflection of the person, the formation of world perception and the development of self-awareness through introspection.

### Modern Parallels

A brief overview of the Armenian medieval literature shows that the harmony of the inner world of the person and the transition from the sensual to the abstract are important characteristics of mental health. To achieve this goal, expressive means are especially important – rhyming words, studying world phenomenon through their elements, distinguishing apathy from emotional exhaustion. Apathy for life difficulties, as well as earthly pleasures and needs, is not an end in itself, but a means of removing from secondary things, a sign of the greatness of human soul and mental health. The medieval understanding of apathy is opposed to emotional exhaustion and becomes a kind of modern psychotherapeutic instrument. In this context,

the main key to the understanding of the anomie in the works of Armenian medieval philosophers is the issue of emotional exhaustion, which is perceived as inability to abstract from secondary things, the impossibility of controlling their own emotions and thoughts. In general, we can say that the medieval perception of anomie is considered as an uncontrolled state of mind.

Modern studies of anomie indicate a certain dynamics in perception. The social component of the anomie becomes paramount. Anomie is mainly characterized by the categories of social isolation, social and cultural alienation and the lack of social norms. Anomie is not a manifestation of an imbalance of the inner world of a person yet, but a characteristic of society, the signs of which are the uncertainty of social norms and the inferior functioning of social institutions. The state of emotional exhaustion or emotional burnout is a consequence of the variability of the values of the personality in the conditions of periodically changing social norms of behavior. The concept of emotional burnout is identified with the professional activity of a person – in other words, with the field of human relationships with the social environment. The understanding of apathy is also transformed. As a sign of anomie, apathy is perceived negatively and is expressed in the disadaptation of the individual to the social environment. Apathy is often identified with the categories of social alienation and social passivity. It is no coincidence that many researchers indicate that the contemporary psychological sign of anomie is the loss of the meaning of life [9; 11; 25; 31; 34; 38; 39].

### Methods

Taking into account the above mentioned there is a need for rethinking and a new vision of psychological term of anomie. Modern scales for measuring anomie are considered by us through a comparative analysis of the historical heritage of Armenian thinkers. The use of this method allows linking contemporary psychological term with the historical roots and filling it with the cultural-historical meanings. We analyzed H. McClosky, J. Schaar Scale [28], D. Dean Scale [12] and R. Middleton Scale [30] measuring anomie variables and emotional burnout assessment method [25].

According to McClosky and Schaar Scale anomie variables are normlessness, isolation and meaninglessness. Middleton Scale offers additional variables of powerlessness, social and cultural estrangement and estrangement from work. And finally, Dean Scale is focused on the variables of normlessness, social isolation and powerlessness.

The sample of the study was provided by the volunteers (N=200). Participation was anonymous and was based on the informed consent of the participants. All participants were 20–30 years old (N=100 men and N=100 women). The purpose of the study was investigation of modern anomie perception before and after reading some fragments from the medieval Armenian sources. We were interested to know whether participants may change their attitude to the Self and surrounding world after reading and discussion of these fragments.

Firstly, we measured anomie variables among all participants. Then we offered to read some fragments of the historical heritage of Armenian thinkers. After this we discussed whether the participants found anything interesting or useful for themselves in these readings. Our task was to reveal any parallels in the thoughts of Armenian philosophers with opinions of the participants about main anomie variables. The results of the study are presented below.

### Results

Based on the results of the study, it was revealed that among the participants the most pronounced were the variables of meaninglessness (34% of participants), normlessness (20%) and social isolation (35%). These results were registered before the discussion phase of the study. After that, during the discussions the study participants tried to find in the medieval texts parallels with their thoughts about anomie and interpret them. As a result of discussions, the participants highlighted the most useful thoughts which help to overcome anomie. The psychotherapeutic effect of discussion and interpretation method was shown by retesting of the participants. According to the results of retesting, the degree of meaninglessness was estimated as a variable by only 21% of the respondents, and the level of social isolation decreased to 17%. The level of normlessness was the most constant and was expressed at 18% of participants.

The results of the study showed that the interpretation of historical and modern thoughts, along with the use of modern psychological diagnostic methods, open up new prospects for studying the mechanisms of overcoming anomie in modern society, make it possible to focus on a person's attention on valuable attitudes and the fundamental issues of perception of Self and the surrounding world.

### Discussion

Summing up several standpoints of social apathy definitions we can underline that perception of apathy mainly refers to social passivity, lack of life meaning, complete or partial loss of interest and indifference to public life changes. Cultural historical and psychological studies of personal development show that the system of values of members of society and their ideas about social well-being often do not coincide with the institutional structure of society that has been formed over the past decades. There are various factors which have a negative impact on the social well-being of the population and lead to the desire to escape or reject reality. As a result, social apathy is manifested negatively in the personalized modern society and heightened as a defensive response to rapidly changing social reality [26; 29].

The manifestations of the growing personalization of modern society are:

– the priority of individual freedom over public interests,

- depreciation of moral standards
- decrease or atrophy of the sense of social responsibility,
- manipulative behavior.

Modern trend in the development of social apathy is saturation with material goods, which boosts a subjective condition, which some scientists call “happy apathy”. Among the features of a consumer society we can list the actual restriction of freedom, the individualization of social norms and values, the egocentricity as a priority, the reduction of public well-being to the behavioral scheme “production-consumption” [18].

The content analysis of the “definition of anomie” given by David Anghaght shows the distinction of the components of the needs of the person, who, to be satisfied needs a situation where he can speak through brief and accurate definitions, reporting the sense of the word. It does not allow the word or phenomenon to fully represent their sense during communication.

All the philosophy of David Anghaght is based on moral and psychological perspectives. He describes in details the personal qualities, indicating the most important features and the process of the transmission of the philosopher, all of these has some personal qualities, such as the manifestation of public behavior, making judgments, the ability of overcoming the cultural and social estrangement and so on.

According to opinion of a well-known Armenian scientist H. Manandyan, David Anghaght’s works are as creative and unusual as works of many members of the Greek philosophical school, they seem inaccessible or incomprehensible to specialists in the field. Some scientists say that David Anghaght was trying to create a certain meta-speaking of a scientific thoughts to target the readers in early Middle Ages. Most of the works, being bilingual, in Armenian and Greek, were approaching at the same time the Armenian-speaking and the Greek-speaking society, which gives an interesting turn to a spiritual significance of the scientific activity of the Armenian philosopher [1].

After deep studying national roots of psycholinguistics, using the works of David Anghaght and Grigor Narekatsi, we can conclude that it is advisable to enrich the modern art-therapeutic methods and techniques with samples of traditional literary works on the national language, having previously developed certain methods of their application and decoding methodology. In particular, the psycholinguistic study of David Anghaght’s works allows us to put forward the methodological technique

of “definition of environmental phenomenon”, which allows us to form a certain attitude and to understand the world through brief logical formulas. Further evaluation of those definitions along with musical, painting and other art-therapeutic methodical techniques will provide an opportunity for full multilateral understanding of the studied phenomenon.

On the basis of the results of the study of Grigor Narekatsi’s works can be created another methodological technique, in particular, art-therapeutic works aimed to understanding of the phenomenon and one’s own Self. It becomes possible to apply such methodologies that will allow to combine different scenarios and carry out appropriate psychotherapeutic works [23; 37; 40].

## Conclusion

The results of comparative analysis of modern and historical parallels of the perception of anomie show that the basic indicators of the modern meanings of anomie are normlessness, meaninglessness, social and cultural estrangement and powerlessness. Comparing these indicators with the historical parallels we came out with the meanings of the reflection of the person, the formation of world perception through the development of self-awareness, self-observation and introspection. Comparing these indicators with the basic concepts of medieval Armenian thinkers, we see that the term *anomie* becomes more communicative. The connection of the individual with society, the awareness of social isolation comes to the fore. In other words, over time the perception of anomie changed from the definition of the concept using internal factors (moral qualities, self-perception, self-observation, introspection) to the use of external factors (the degree of socialization, the activity of social ties, sociability, knowledge of social norms, etc).

An analysis of modern and historical parallels of perception of anomie in Armenian society opens up new opportunities for further research on this issue. In particular, it seems necessary to develop methodological approaches in order to develop mechanisms to overcome anomie in modern society:

- Modern interpretation of thoughts of Armenian medieval philosophers using psycholinguistics methods,
- The transformation of the negative manifestations of social apathy into the positive constructions of the perception of Self and the surrounding world.

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## Coping Strategies in Emerging Adulthood Among Russian Students

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As people grow up, coping strategies shift towards more adaptive styles, but little is known about coping processes in relation to psychological attributes of the new transitional period of “emerging adulthood” (ages 18–25). Applying the cultural-historical theory developed by L.S. Vygotsky and the ideas of J. Arnett’s neo-Eriksonian cultural theory of development, we have investigated the parameters of emerging adulthood (identity exploration and self-focus; negativity and instability; personal freedom; experimentation and possibilities; feeling in-between; and other-focus) as peculiar features of social situation of development related to coping strategies among Russian students. The sample consisted of data obtained from 510 students, aged 18 to 25 (40,1% male), studying at universities in cities of Moscow and Tula, Russia. The study presents the measurements of emerging adulthood (IDEA-R) and coping strategies (WCQ) using methods adapted to the Russian research pool. The findings suggest that prolongation of the transitional period to adulthood is associated with an increase in avoidant and emotion-focused coping strategies. We have found that the degree of anxiety caused by transitional instability and self-focus of young adults could work as predictors of attempts to overcome difficulties. Among them are problem denial, inflated expectations, suppression of emotions and self-blaming. The degree of openness to experimenting with life, optimism about the future, identity exploration, and other-focus worked as predictors of problem-solving, positive rethinking of the challenging situation, and seeking social support. We noticed that age and gender factors reduce the degree of dependence of coping strategies on psychological attributes of emerging adulthood. The study materials contribute to the understanding of the processes the age-related psychological development of modern youth deals with.

**Keywords:** age, social situation of development, age period, transitional period, emerging adulthood, youth, adulting, students, coping.

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# Копинг-стратегии в период формирующейся взрослости у российских студентов

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По мере взросления копинги изменяются в сторону более адаптивных стилей, но мало известно о процессах совладания в связи с психологическими особенностями нового переходного периода — формирующейся взрослости (18–25 лет). Через призму интеграции положений культурно-исторической теории Л.С. Выготского и идей неозриксоновской культурной теории развития Дж. Арнета мы исследовали параметры формирующейся взрослости (исследование идентичности и сосредоточенность на себе, негативность и нестабильность, личная свобода, эксперименты и возможности, чувство «между», ориентация на других) как особенности социальной ситуации развития в связи с копингами среди российских студентов. Выборку составили данные, полученные от 510 студентов в возрасте от 18 до 25 лет (40,1% — мужчины), обучающихся в университетах Москвы и Тулы. В исследовании измерялись показатели формирующейся взрослости (IDEA-R) и копингов (WCQ) с использованием адаптированных к российской выборке методик. Полученные результаты дают возможность говорить о том, что удлинение переходного периода взросления ассоциировано с повышением избегающих и эмоционально фокусированных копингов. Мы обнаружили, что степень тревоги от нестабильности переходного периода и сосредоточенность на себе у формирующихся взрослых являются предикторами попыток преодолеть трудности за счет отрицания проблемы, неоправданных ожиданий, подавления эмоций и самообвинения, а степень их открытости для экспериментов с жизнью, оптимизма в отношении будущего, исследования идентичности и ориентации на другого — предикторами планирования решения и положительного переосмысления проблемной ситуации, поиска социальной поддержки. Наблюдался эффект влияния возраста и пола на снижение меры зависимости копингов от психологических особенностей формирующейся взрослости. Материалы исследования помогают понять процессы, лежащие в основе возрастного-психологического развития современной молодежи.

**Ключевые слова:** возраст, социальная ситуация развития, возрастной период, переходный период, формирующаяся взрослость, молодежь, взросление, студенты, копинг.

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## Introduction

In the 21st century, post-industrial society provides young people with more choices and poses challenges with high educational requirements, it modifies the process of growing up. Modern people increasingly delay social transitions (graduation and starting a career, marriage and parenthood) and remain financially dependent on their parents until the age of 25–29. The beginning of adulthood — ages 18–25 — is a time of increased opportunities and developmental risks [20], the acuteness of which is evident in the context of current problems and challenges — COVID pandemic, cybersocialization, transformation of education and labor market, global crises: young people are exposed to academic, social, and

professional stresses, they learn new roles and resources, become involved in new contexts and learn to cope with problems [2; 30]. In an attempt to understand the dynamics of adulting, researchers currently describe the period between the ages of 18–25 as a *transitional period of emerging adulthood*, involving social, mental, and personality changes [5; 31], as well as ongoing processes of neurobiological and physiological maturation [12], and as a period of “delayed adulthood” — a time of delayed transition from adolescence to adulthood [21; 30].

We contribute to the discussion of the *scientific status* of the issue of emerging adulthood by providing insight into the age-specific psychological features of the period through the lens of the cultural-historical theory [1]. In our opinion, the tenets of L.S. Vygotsky’s cultur-

al-historical theory of development relating to age can be applied to interpret the features of emerging adulthood [21] different from the development of adults [22] and adolescents [16]:

1) *identity exploration* (search of identity, choosing among alternatives for the development of one's Self in the domain of career, interpersonal relations, ideology, etc.);

2) *experimentation* (biographical experimentation with different roles and directions in life) and *possibilities* (personal freedom and awareness of the unprecedented opportunity to build a life according to one's own plan; optimism about one's goals, potential interpersonal relationships, and career);

3) *negativity and instability* (excitement in exploring life's possibilities is combined with anxiety from the uncertainty of choosing a strategy in love, work, residency, etc.);

4) *self-focus* (refusal to commit to others, self-centeredness, desire to protect one's longer path to adulthood than that of the previous generation); and

5) *feeling in-between* (a liminal state of transition, when adolescence ends and preconditions for adulthood emerge).

Taking into account the theoretical and methodological differences in the theories (L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory and J. Arnett's cultural theory of development), we tried to integrate the ideas into a consistent unity, preserving their strengths.

L.S. Vygotsky noted "...the exclusion of the period of development, usually called youth, covering the ages after 17–18 and up to the onset of final maturity" [1, p. 19] from the pattern of child development. However, in the socio-cultural practices and institutions of socialization that have undergone changes in recent decades, a new adulthood is formed. The current understanding of emerging adulthood as a transitional period reflects L.S. Vygotsky's idea of *environment as a source of development*. Cultural and social determinants that define the content of emerging adulthood are noted by J. Arnett, who emphasizes the social expectations of society regarding the moratorium on the adoption of adult responsibilities by twenty-year-olds: modern society allows young people to gradually settle down into the roles of adult life [30].

The key to understanding the specificity of age, according to L.S. Vygotsky, is the social situation of development: "...by the beginning of each age period a completely peculiar, age-specific, exceptional, unique and unparalleled relationship between the child and the surrounding reality, primarily social, is developed" [1, p. 24]. Modern Russian psychology [7] substantiates the use of the explanatory potential of the construct of "social situation of development" in determining the content and direction of human development at all stages of ontogenesis, including adulthood. But among the pe-

culiar features of the social situation of development of young people aged 18–25 modern researchers outline a rather wide range of parameters.

We make an attempt to analyze the features of emerging adulthood L.S. Vygotsky's ideas which express the young people's subjective assessments of their relations with the social environment, as *characteristics of the social situation of development*.

The arguments in favor of our assumption can be supported by cross-cultural data obtained using the IDEA (Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood) scale [21]. The structural variations of emerging adulthood factors over the last 16 years reveal: 1) their consistent decline from the beginning to the end of age [22; 30]; 2) imprecise replication of the structure in samples of more than 20 countries — America, Europe, Asia and Africa, etc. [16; 24], but dependence on socialization conditions [8]. Similar psychological characteristics are observed by Russian researchers [3]. The authors [31] prove the necessity of socio-economic and psychological support from adults for the positive trajectory of personal development (in respect of education, profession, interpersonal relations, and health) during the period of emerging adulthood.

The features of emerging adulthood reflect the culturally mediated relations of young people with the social world, rooted in established conditions and traditions. *The contradiction of the social situation of development* occurs in the space of "delayed adulthood": with the full range of opportunities and rights to be an adult, feeling the need to rely on their resources when making decisions in an uncertain environment, young people do not see themselves as adults, experimenting with increased opportunities and experiencing anxiety and worry.

Understanding the features of emerging adulthood as the peculiar features of the social situation of development of 18–25-year-olds in the context of cultural-historical theory allows us to present a scientifically-based view of the complex modern adulting processes, which can become a significant contribution to the cross-cultural study of Russian youth.

Let us illustrate the assumption of understanding the emerging adulthood as characteristics of the social situation of development of 18–25-year-olds *by the example of the links between the features of emerging adulthood and coping strategies*.

Modern psychologists proceed from the understanding of coping in the context of transactional, contextual, and process-oriented approaches [29] — as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" [14, p. 141]. Many psychological works devoted to the study of coping among college students emphasize social and situational factors, as well as biological and personality predictors. A complete review is beyond the scope of

the current study, so we will focus on those that provide age-specific characteristics of coping in emerging adults.

Most comparative studies that included a group of 18–25-year-olds among their participants *ignore the age-specific psychological characteristics* of the group. Only a few works provide data on the role of age in coping shifts. The mediating function of coping between perfectionism and academic adaptation [6], anxiety and executive functions [18] in students was revealed. The age determination of coping from the perspective of identity status [20; 25] and developing spirituality [27] was substantiated. The dependence of coping on gender has been demonstrated: young women more often seek social support and are more emotional [10; 13; 17], and young men use humor [10] and rational styles [17], but by the end of emerging adulthood there are no differences. With age, there is a tendency for problem-focused coping to increase and escape-avoidance coping to decline [13]. Problem-focused and meaning-focused coping increase at the age of 17-24, while emotion-focused coping declines [9; 15]. Self-concept dynamics do not bias coping choices after age 18 [23], but variability in the trajectory of ego development [28] and the degree of identity cohesion/diffusion in 18–25-year-olds influence the coping choices [23; 26]. Emerging adults are less resilient to coping with mental health problems and more prone to maladaptive coping than older generations [11]; and although, like adolescents, they often resort to problem solving and support seeking, they predominantly turn to cognitive strategies [19; 29]. As in adolescence, mothers' closeness and care mediates the use of problem-focused coping strategies by emerging adults [27; 30]. In general, emerging adults' coping behaviors change toward more adaptive strategies [19]. But no studies of *the links between the features of emerging adulthood and coping strategies* are available.

With the present study, we clarify the age-specific features of coping at the age of 18 to 25, providing our answers to the questions why and how the features of emerging adulthood as characteristics of the social situation of development affect the choice of coping.

## Research agenda

**Hypothesis of empirical study** – the factors of emerging adulthood act as predictors of the choice of maladaptive and adaptive coping strategies at the age of 18-25.

**Purpose of empirical study** is to examine the coping strategies associated with the factors of emerging adulthood.

**Sample.** The study involved 510 people aged 18–25 studying at universities in Moscow (n = 300) and Tula (n = 210). The median age was 19 years. Of these, 59,9% (n = 305) were women and 40,1% (n = 206) were men; 70,8% (n = 361) were not employed; 78,5% (n = 400) were financially dependent on their parents; 50% (n = 255) lived with their parents; 98% (n = 499) were not married and had no children.

**Procedure.** The survey was conducted online (2023).

**Instruments.** The IDEA-R [3] and the WCQ [4] assessment tools adapted to the Russian research pool were applied.

**Data processing** was carried out applying the correlation analysis (*r*-test), stepwise multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), *t*-test, and multiple linear regression (least squares method – LSM).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between factors are listed in Table 1.

Negativity and instability are associated with maladaptive coping, whereas identity exploration/self-focus, personal freedom, experimentation/possibilities, and other-focus are associated with adaptive coping.

Table 2 presents the data from the analysis of variance. Only variables with statistically significant results are presented. Age groups are formed on the basis of chronological age.

The data given in Table 2 demonstrate the links between age, coping strategies (problem-focused coping, seeking so-

Table 1

**Descriptive statistics and correlations between emerging adulthood factors and coping strategies (N=510)**

| Variables of emerging adulthood   | M(SD)         | Variables of coping strategies |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
|                                   |               | C                              | D     | S     | SSS   | AR    | E     | PPS    | PP    |
| Aggregate                         | 101,39(11,60) | ,22**                          | ,11** | ,17** | ,12** | ,16** | ,20** | ,11**  | ,22** |
| Identity exploration / self-focus | 35,46(4,60)   | ,14**                          | –,01  | ,13** | ,21** | ,06   | ,03   | ,22**  | ,23** |
| Negativity/instability            | 22,45(4,96)   | ,21**                          | ,25** | ,20** | ,00   | ,25** | ,39** | –,17** | ,00   |
| Personal freedom                  | 13,56(2,40)   | ,04                            | –,06  | ,05   | ,08*  | –,04  | –,07  | ,19**  | ,18** |
| Experimentation/possibilities     | 14,26(1,96)   | ,19**                          | –,02  | ,06   | ,17** | ,04   | ,00   | ,22**  | ,27** |
| Feeling in-between                | 7,00(1,30)    | ,10*                           | ,10*  | ,08   | ,03   | ,10*  | ,17** | ,00    | ,14** |
| Other-focus                       | 8,66(2,09)    | ,05                            | –,02  | ,03   | ,03   | ,02   | –,05  | ,13**  | ,16** |

Note: C – confrontive coping; D – distancing; S – self-controlling; SSS – seeking social support; AR – accepting responsibility; E – escape-avoidance; PPS – planful problem-solving; PP – positive reappraisal; M (SD) – arithmetic mean (standard deviation); “\*” – two-tailed significance test  $p \leq ,05$ ; “\*\*” – two-tailed significance test  $p \leq ,01$ .

cial support) and features of emerging adulthood (experimentation/possibilities, feeling in-between and other-focus). We found the following age and gender differences: *feeling in-between* (mean values range from 6.8 (18 years) to 4.0 (25 years) for men and from 7.5 (18 years) to 4.1 (25 years) for women) *and seeking social support* (mean values range from 9.4 (18 years) to 8.4 (25 years) for men and from

11.5 (18 years) to 8.5 (25 years) for women) *decline more dynamically with age in women than in men.*

The results of regression analysis are shown in Table 3. Only significant factors data are given.

Although regression indexes are low, the contributions of emerging adulthood factors to the variability of copings are observed.

Table 2

**Analysis of variance (MANOVA) of emerging adulthood factors and coping strategies with age and gender (N=510)**

| Variables                        | Model significance tests |      | Note               |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------|
|                                  | F                        | p    |                    |
| <i>Age</i>                       |                          |      |                    |
| Experimentation/possibilities    | 1,82                     | ,02  | Declines with age  |
| Feeling in-between               | 3,69                     | ,000 |                    |
| Coping – seeking social support  | 1,68                     | ,03  |                    |
| Other-focus                      | 1,70                     | ,03  | Increases with age |
| Coping – planful problem-solving | 2,08                     | ,02  |                    |
| <i>Gender/Age</i>                |                          |      |                    |
| Coping – seeking social support  | 1,70                     | ,04  | -                  |
| Feeling in-between               | 1,80                     | ,03  | -                  |

Table 3

**Results of regression analysis of emerging adulthood factors and coping strategies (N=510)**

| Predictors   | F-test                  | Model significance tests     |                          |           |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
|  |                         | β-coefficient (standardized) | t-test                   | R-squared |
| <i>Response variable – confrontive coping</i>              |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Negativity/instability                                     | F = 7,26<br>(p = ,000)  | ,20                          | t = 4,39<br>(p = ,000)   | ,09       |
| Experimentation/possibilities                              |                         | ,17                          | t = 3,28<br>(p = ,001)   |           |
| <i>Response variable – distancing coping</i>               |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Negativity/instability                                     | F = 6,09<br>(p = ,000)  | ,26                          | t = 5,51<br>(p = ,000)   | ,06       |
| <i>Response variable – self-controlling coping</i>         |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Negativity/instability                                     | F = 5,04<br>(p = ,000)  | ,21                          | t = 4,46<br>(p = ,000)   | ,05       |
| <i>Response variable – seeking social support coping</i>   |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Identity exploration/self-focus                            | F = 5,23<br>(p = ,000)  | ,22                          | t = 3,76<br>(p = ,000)   | ,06       |
| Experimentation/possibilities                              |                         | ,12                          | t = 2,28<br>(p = ,02)    |           |
| <i>Response variable – accepting responsibility coping</i> |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Negativity/instability                                     | F = 6,33<br>(p = ,000)  | ,25                          | t = 5,23<br>(p = ,000)   | ,07       |
| <i>Response variable – escape-avoidance coping</i>         |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Negativity/instability                                     | F = 18,15<br>(p = ,000) | ,40                          | t = 9,15<br>(p = ,000)   | ,19       |
| Other-focus  |                         | -,16                         | t = - 3,58<br>(p = ,000) |           |
| <i>Response variable – planful problem-solving coping</i>  |                         |                              |                          |           |
| Identity exploration/self-focus                            | F = 10,20<br>(p = ,000) | ,15                          | t = 2,60<br>(p = ,01)    | ,11       |
| Negativity/instability                                     |                         | -,20                         | t = -4,33<br>(p = ,000)  |           |

| Predictors   | F-test                        | Model significance tests            |                               |           |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
|  |                               | $\beta$ -coefficient (standardized) | t-test                        | R-squared |
| Experimentation/possibilities                          |                               | ,14                                 | t = 2,72<br>( $\rho = ,01$ )  |           |
| Other-focus  |                               | ,10                                 | t = 2,31<br>( $\rho = ,02$ )  |           |
| <i>Response variable – positive reappraisal coping</i> |                               |                                     |                               |           |
| Experimentation/possibilities                          | F = 8,66<br>( $\rho = ,000$ ) | ,20                                 | t = 3,90<br>( $\rho = ,000$ ) | ,09       |

## Discussion

This study expands the scope of previous research in the psychology of adulting and adulthood, offering a new perspective on the features of emerging adulthood, investigated in foreign developmental psychology as measurable parameters of the social situation of development of young people aged 18-25, in line with L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. We see the heuristic possibilities of the proposed research paradigm in describing the age patterns of adulting of modern youth.

The study confirmed the assumption of a change in coping strategies associated with the age-specific psychological features of emerging adulthood: not only the chronological age, but also the peculiar perception of the age period of 18-25 years as the time of "delayed adulthood" determine the transition of growing up youth to more adaptive coping strategies and the rejection of maladaptive ones. The results are consistent with the findings of the previous studies [15; 18; 25; 28] and support our hypothesis about the social situation of development. In the system of links between the individual features of the relationship between young people and social reality, embodied in the parameters of emerging adulthood, a resource for coping with the challenges of this transition – overcoming the contradiction of the social situation of development – is revealed.

Chronological age seems to be a conditional factor of change, since coping dynamics may differ in specific situations and in different individuals. A possible explanation for the role of age may be that over time, inclusion in adult life requires more initiative, responsibility, independence, autonomy, when coping development becomes arbitrarily controlled.

The age and gender differences in coping found by us are consistent with the results of the previous studies [9; 13; 15], demonstrating a greater tendency of women to focus on social support and to more quickly

overcome the feeling in-between, which is probably due to the greater sociopsychological adaptation of women and their earlier psychological maturation compared to men.

The limitation is related to the selected strategy of the empirical study. We proposed an explanation of coping on the basis of the peculiarities of the social situation of development in the period of emerging adulthood. But some issues remain unresolved. First, the results do not allow conclusions about age or situational changes over time. Second, the study did not address all coping processes. Third, the limited study sampling does not allow for broad generalization of the results. This requires further empirical research into the social situation of development of emerging adulthood.

## Conclusion

1. The features of the transitional period of emerging adulthood (identity exploration and self-focus; negativity and instability; personal freedom; experimentation and possibilities; feeling in-between; and other-focus) as measurable parameters of the social situation of development of young people ages 18-25 in the context of L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory were substantiated, which allowed us to present a scientifically grounded view of the complex modern adulting processes in Russian youth, with account taken of the sociocultural context, contributing to the cross-cultural research on age development.

2. Age-specific psychological features of coping related to the perception of emerging adulthood as parameters of the social situation of development of college students ages 18-25 were empirically substantiated. Identity exploration, experimentation and possibilities, and other-focus were shown to be the predictors of adaptive coping strategies, while negativity/instability was a predictor of maladaptive coping strategies.

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# Profiles of Family Resilience and Vitality of Representatives of Russian and Belarusian Families

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The article describes the results of cross-cultural research on the resilience and experience of family relations of Russian and Belarusian families. Comparative studies of the resilience of families of different ethnicities are both of theoretical and practical interest. The purpose of the study is to analyze the resilience and experience of family relations' profiles of Russian and Belarusian families' representatives. Representatives of 399 Russian and 404 Belarusian families took part in the study. We used the Russian-language version of the Family Resilience Assessment Scale, the questionnaires "Family Emotional Communications", "Experience of Close Relationships", and the projective technique of K. Adams "Space of Trees and Light". There are three clusters on indicators of family resilience, family emotional communications and experience of close relationships ("anxious-critical", "viable", "emotionally restrained"). We give a description of the family resilience of the representatives from different clusters, the study revealed that there were no significant differences in the distribution of clusters between representatives of Russian and Belarusian families. At the same time, the study revealed differences in individual vitality of Russian and Belarusian families. Using narrative approach to historical memory, we analyzed the correlation of factors of individual vitality. We have outlined prospects for further research on this issue.

**Keywords:** family resilience, Russian and Belarusian families, cross-cultural analysis, clusters, "anxious-critical", "vitality", "emotionally restrained".

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## Профили семейной жизнеспособности и жизнестойкость представителей российских и белорусских семей

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В статье изложены результаты кросскультурного исследования профилей семейной жизнеспособности и индивидуальной жизнестойкости представителей российских и белорусских семей. Сравнительные исследования жизнеспособности семей разных народов представляют интерес, как для теории, так и для практики. Цель исследования — анализ профилей семейной жизнеспособности и индивидуальной жизнестойкости представителей российских и белорусских семей. В исследовании приняли участие представители 399 российских и 404 белорусских семей. Использованы русскоязычная версия Шкалы оценки жизнеспособности семьи, опросники: «Семейные эмоциональные коммуникации», «Опыт близких отношений», проективная методика К. Адамс «Пространство дерева и света» и «Тест жизнестойкости». Выделены три кластера по показателям жизнеспособности семьи, семейных эмоциональных коммуникаций и опыта близких отношений («тревожно-критичные», «жизнеспособные», «эмоционально сдержанные»). Дана характеристика жизнеспособности семей представителей разных кластеров, выявлено отсутствие существенных различий в распределении по кластерам между представителями российских и белорусских семей. Выявлены различия индивидуальной жизнестойкости представителей российских и белорусских семей. Намечены перспективы дальнейших исследований по данной проблеме.

**Ключевые слова:** семейная жизнеспособность, жизнестойкость, российские и белорусские семьи, кросскультурный анализ, профили «тревожно-критичные», «жизнеспособные», «эмоционально сдержанные».

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## Introduction

In modern society, where the social role of the family is changing and the importance of marriage tends to be underestimated or denied, the problem of family resilience becomes particularly relevant. Family resilience, the experience of close relationships and emotional experience acquired in parental families become the most important aspects of the social situation of personal development in the family, including the development of resilience, which is one of an individual's key assets. Based on the analysis of a significant number of approaches and concepts, it is shown that there is no single understanding of vitality, but generalizing various authors' views, it is possible to state that it is understood as "creative realization of one's personal potential, resistance not to the requirements of a particular life situation, but to the opportunities it provides for the implementation of one's own goals, senses, purposes of a person, it is courage to live and to create life" [12, p. 179]. Resilience is understood as a dynamic characteristic of the family, ensuring its sustainability to respond flexibly to modern challenges, change, adapt and evolve [2; 8].

Data on resilience is more relevant to studying family resilience because the vitality of the people who start the family serves to underpin family resilience.

The cross-cultural aspect of family resilience is also interesting. Comparative studies of family resilience are particularly important for nations with similar historical destinies and close links in politics, economy and culture, as is the case with Russia and Belarus. Researchers stress the importance of cross-cultural studies of this problem [19]; the growing interest in them is evidenced by numerous adaptations of M. Sixby's Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) in different countries and cultures [20; 22; 23; 24; 26], which find cross-cultural differences in the structure of family resilience, but do not explain their nature.

Despite the interest in this issue in the field of psychology, comparative studies on Russian and Belarusian families' resilience have not been conducted. Conflicting data on personal coping resources, including vitality, have been obtained from comparative studies of Russian and Belarusian students' individual vitality [6], different generations of Belarusians and Russians [13]. It is shown that the level of accepting risk as one of the characteristics of vitality is higher among Belarusian students than among Russian students [6]. At the same time, due to differences in cultural and historical conditions of different generations' life, the level of personal resources of Russian youth is shown to be higher than that of Belarusian one [13].

Analysis of the literature shows that most authors link the characteristics of family resilience and vitality to the values of people's culture in one way or another. There are several approaches to the genesis of national

culture values. For example, V.G. Krysko [7] attaches great importance to the historical aspects of ethnogenesis. Based on his works, N.O. Leonenko and co-authors define ethnic identity as a psychological mechanism of forming national culture values. According to N.O. Leonenko, Eastern European students are less resistant if they have a low level of ethnic identity [5]. Obviously, ethnic identity has not only quantitative, but also substantive characteristics, which are culturally and historically conditioned.

G. Hofstede attempted to use parameters such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and long-term orientation to reflect the meaningful characteristics of culture. His model is used to describe personality types under certain cultural and historical conditions [11]. However, this model is poor at predicting individual behavior [4]. J. Wertch's narrative approach [25] considers the content of ethnic identity and cultural characteristics in the context of people's historical memory. This is understood as a narrative in which historical events have different meanings for different peoples and, within a nation, for different social groups' representatives. One of the most important themes in the Russian historical narrative, as rightly identified by J. Wertch, consists in fighting the foreign invaders who wanted to enslave the country and in completing the victory. Researchers emphasize the complementarity of the narrative approach and cultural-historical theory [16].

The following statement may serve to illustrate the historical narrative of the Belarusian ethnos: "Resignation to the inevitable and readiness for full revival are proofs of Belarusians' spiritual strength. Another argument of this spiritual strength is the Belarusian people's unprecedented resistance movement during the Great Patriotic War" [6, p. 326]. At the same time, we cannot ignore the tragic undertone of this narrative. A striking literary example are the works by the outstanding Belarusian writer Vasil Bykov, where the choice between moral loyalty and treason becomes the choice between death and a traitor's despised life. The implicit necessity of the choice between acceptance-humility or complete rebirth at the cost of suffering should also be noted in the content of this narrative.

We can assume that the family history narrative, which is an order in the consciousness of family members of significant events, including those representing difficult life situations, mediates the influence of historical narrative on family resilience. Naturally, the family narrative is formed under the significant influence of the folk memory narrative. Therefore, when studying family resilience, it is important to study family history events, which are closely connected with the country's history and mediate the influence of historical narrative on family personality development. Thus, in the first years after the collapse of the USSR, which were

marked by a large-scale economic crisis, the historical narrative of the nation, thanks to the representatives of the older generation, strengthened the family's resilience, because the elders passed this narrative on to the younger generations in their families ("We survived the war and will make it through this!"). However, the mechanisms by which individual vitality emerges in the context of historical narrative and familial resilience remain unclear. We can assume that these factors are, firstly, familial resilience, emotional communication at home and experience of close relations, and, secondly, specific social circumstances. This may account for the conflicting data obtained in the research by N.V. Murashchenkova and colleagues, which found a high level of civic identity among Belarusian students, but also a high level of resentment, disadvantage and emigratory tendencies [9; 10]. The nature of these contradictions and ideas about the influence of cultural and historical context on the development of vitality as a personal characteristic could be clarified by a cross-cultural empirical study aimed at identifying profiles of family resilience and individual vitality.

**The study aims** to analyze family resilience profiles, including family resilience, family emotional communication, experience of close relationship and individual vitality of representatives of Russian and Belarusian families.

**Study objectives.**

— To compare family resilience, emotional communication, and experience of close relationships among Russian and Belarusian families.

— To identify family resilience profiles and to analyze their correlation with demographics.

— To compare Russian and Belarusian family resilience.

**Study hypothesis:** Resilience profiles of Russian and Belarusian families are more similar than individual vitality characteristics of Russian and Belarusian representatives.

## Methods

**Study programme.** The study was approved by MSUPE Ethical Committee (protocol no. 12 of 15.03.2022). The following methods were used therein.

1. Russian version of the Family Resilience Assessment Scale by E.S. Gusarova et al. (41 points, subscales: "Family Communication", "Positive Forecasting and Problem Solving", "Acceptance and Flexibility", "Social Resources", "Spirituality") – to assess the resilience of the family to which a person considers himself/herself) [2].

2. The questionnaire "Family Emotional Communications" (FEC) by A.B. Kholmogorova and S.V. Volikova (30 points, scales: "Parental criticism", "Inducing anxiety in the family", "Eliminating emotions in the

family", "Fixation of negative experiences", "Striving for external well-being (hostility and facade)", "Overinvolvement" and "Family perfectionism") – to study emotional communications in the parental family [17].

3. The questionnaire "Experience of Close Relationships" by Fraley R.C. et al., adapted by K.A. Chistopolskaya (14 points, scales: "Anxiety" and "Avoidance") – to study one's own experience of close relationships [18].

4. K. Adams' projective technique "Space of Trees and Light" [14]. The participant is shown four illustrations and is asked to choose the one that most closely reflects the period of his or her childhood. The first illustration ("Living space") shows a child sitting next to a mighty tree, its roots reaching deep into the ground and its large crown serving as a defense. This space symbolizes the strong foundation of culture, tradition, and protection. The second picture, "Shimmering space", depicts a dark, dense forest, a path along which a child is walking, supported by an adult, and light shining through the trees. This space symbolizes the quest to understand their culture and traditions with the support of an adult. The third illustration, "Opaque space", depicts dusk, the sun is setting over the horizon, there are almost no trees, but the child's dark silhouette is clearly visible. The picture symbolizes loneliness, anxiety, worry and fear, but some cultural traditions are still present. The fourth picture is "Invisible space" with trees in the mist, there is no child in the picture. The picture symbolizes doubt, rejecting others, distancing from tradition and culture, "losing one's roots".

5. A short version of the vitality test by E.N. Osin and E.I. Rasskazova (24 points) [15].

The first three questionnaires were used to investigate family resilience, family emotional communications in parental families and the experience of close relationships. K. Adams' projective technique was used to clarify these data. Method 5 was used to assess individual vitality.

When analyzing difficult life situations, the author's scheme developed over the classification proposed by E.V. Bityutskaya and A.A. Korneev was applied [1].

The study involved 803 participants, 399 from Russia (320 women and 79 men, mean age 31.6 + 12.4) and 404 from Belarus (345 women and 59 men, mean age 23.0 + 7.8).

## Results

Comparison of average indicators of Russian and Belarusian families according to family resilience methods, questionnaires "Family emotional communications" and "Experience of close relationships" showed no significant differences on most scales, except those listed in Table 1.

Russian families more often turn to spirituality as a resource of family resilience and at the same time the rating of the emotions' elimination and the demonstration of external well-being in parental families higher.

Table 1

**Differences in the characteristics of family resilience and emotional communication  
 in Russian and Belarusian families**

| Parameters              | Russian families |                    | Belarusian families |                    | Mann-Whitney U test | Significance of differences <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                         | Average          | Standard deviation | Average             | Standard deviation |                     |                                      |
| Spirituality            | 24.74            | 6.16               | 23.70               | 6.03830            | 71086.5             | 0.004                                |
| Elimination of emotions | 8.57             | 3.96               | 7.89                | 3.67               | 72218.0             | 0.011                                |
| External well-being     | 5.49             | 2.17               | 5.10                | 2.05               | 71262.0             | 0.004                                |

There are also significant differences between the representatives of the two countries, according to the data of K. Adams' technique "Space of Trees and Light" (Table 2).

The data on K. Adams' projective technique "Space of Trees and Light" illustrate the differences in the characteristics of family resilience and family emotional communication in representatives of Russian and Belarusian families. The Russians chose the "Living Space", symbolizing a strong foundation and protection, significantly less often and the "Shimmering Space", symbolizing the desire to understand their cultural environment with the support of an adult, more often. On the contrary, representatives of Belarusian families were much less likely to choose the "Invisible Space", which illustrates "loss of roots", distance from traditions and culture. A higher indicator of spirituality as an aspect of family resilience among Russians is associated with a significantly higher choice of "Shimmering Space". In the Belarusian sample, the majority preference for "Living Space" and a rarer choice of "Invisible Space" are combined with lower indicators of the elimination of emotions and external well-being in the family than in the Russian sample.

The small number of differences in family resilience, family emotional communications in parental families and the absence of differences in the experience of close relationships allowed us to combine the Russian and Belarusian samples to identify family resilience profiles. The k-means cluster analysis, which took into account the data on the Family Resilience Scale and the Family Emotional Communications and Close Relationship Experience questionnaires, was conducted for the entire sample with normalization of data through z-scores.

The first cluster (N = 179) included representatives of families with lower scores on all scales of family resili-

ence and higher anxiety, avoidance, and criticism ("anxious-critical"). The second cluster (N = 323) included individuals with high scores on family resilience and low scores on avoidance, anxiety, criticism, and elimination of emotions ("viable"). The third cluster (N = 301) consists of representatives of families with average values of all characteristics of family resilience, anxiety, avoidance, criticism, low levels of overinvolvement, family perfectionism, but with a peak on elimination of emotions ("emotionally restrained") (Fig. 1).

Representatives of Russian and Belarusian families were evenly distributed across the clusters ( $\chi^2 = 0.130$ ;  $p = 0.937$ ). Differences were found in the ratings of the intensity of individual events (statistical effect at  $df = 5$   $F = 9.24$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), which were significantly higher for representatives of Belarusian families. No significant differences were found when assessing the intensity of family-related events. No differences were found between the representatives of the different clusters according to gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.912$ ;  $p = 0.634$ ); disability ( $\chi^2 = 0.501$ ;  $p = 0.778$ ); presence of a disabled child in the family ( $\chi^2 = 4.503$ ;  $p = 0.105$ ). However, the groups differed by family status (Table 3).

Significantly, 60.3 per cent of those in the "anxious-critical" cluster are not in a relationship, compared with no more than 40 per cent of those in the "viable" and "emotionally restrained" clusters. Only 11.2% of the "anxious-critical" are in a registered marriage, while among the "viable" and "emotionally restrained" more than a third or slightly less have such a marital status.

The groups also differed in the presence of children in their families ( $\chi^2 = 22.94$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Only 12.1 per cent of the "anxious-critical" have children, whereas 42.7 per cent of the "viable" and 45.2 per cent of the "emotionally reserved" have children. The groups also differ in the number of children in their families (Table 4).

Table 2

**Choice of pictures of the projective technique "Space of Trees and Light" by representatives  
 of Russian and Belarusian families**

| Country | Picture |    |     |    | Total | $\chi^2$ , significance of differences |
|---------|---------|----|-----|----|-------|--|
|         | 1       | 2  | 3   | 4  |       |  |
| Russia  | 168     | 74 | 106 | 51 | 399   | $\chi^2 = 11.383$<br>$p = 0.01$        |
| Belarus | 214     | 53 | 100 | 37 | 404   |  |

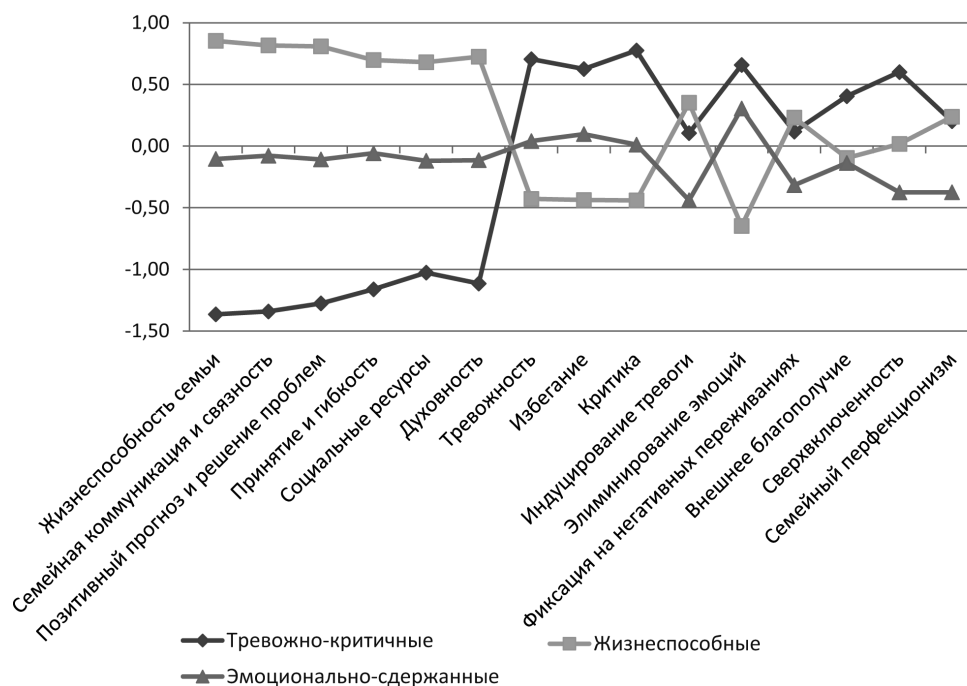


Fig. 1. Ratio of indicators by research methods in clusters (z-scores)

Table 3

Family statuses of representatives of different clusters

| Family status               | Anxious-critical | Viable | Emotionally restrained | $\chi^2$ , significance level   |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Single                      | 60.3%            | 38.1%  | 40.5%                  | $\chi^2 = 42.67$<br>$p = 0.000$ |
| In an unregistered marriage | 2.8%             | 4.0%   | 3.3%                   |                                 |
| Married                     | 11.2%            | 33.4%  | 29.2%                  |                                 |
| In a relationship           | 22.9%            | 20.1%  | 22.9%                  |                                 |
| Divorced                    | 1.7%             | 4.0%   | 4.0%                   |                                 |
| No answer                   | 1.1%             | 0.3%   | 0,0%                   |                                 |

Table 4

Number of children in families of representatives of different clusters

| Number of children in a family | Anxious-critical | Viable | Emotionally restrained | $\chi^2$ , significance level   |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| None                           | 27.0%            | 38.9%  | 34.1%                  | $\chi^2 = 27.58$<br>$p = 0.000$ |
| One child                      | 14.9%            | 38.8%  | 46.3%                  |                                 |
| Two children                   | 8.8%             | 49.5%  | 41.8%                  |                                 |
| Many children                  | 8.3%             | 41.7%  | 50.0%                  |                                 |

Among the study participants without children, 27% are “anxious-critical”, among members of families with two children, only 8.8%, and among representatives of large families, only 8.3%. The “viable” and “emotionally restrained” clusters make up the absolute majority of representatives of families with two or more children.

Significant differences were also found between the representatives of the three clusters in terms of the types of family situations that were seen as challenges (Table 5).

Some family challenge situations were mentioned quite rarely, e.g. intrapersonal problems (depression,

loss of meaning, etc.), but in terms of content they differed significantly from other situations and were singled out as a separate group. Some types of difficult situations are almost equally frequent in the different groups (intrapersonal problems, difficulties at work or in studies, multiple difficulties, of which relocation is an important part, as situations where several difficulties are interrelated at the same time). The biggest differences are problems in relationships with other relatives (mentioned by more than a third of the “anxious-critical”, while representatives of other clusters mentioned it much less frequently) and loss of relatives. This situation was mentioned as a challenge by 17.9%



Table 5

Challenge situations in families of representatives of different clusters

| Types of situations   | Anxious-critical | Viable | Emotionally restrained | $\chi^2$ , significance level    |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Not mentioned         | 10.1%            | 9.9%   | 8.0%                   | $\chi^2 = 29.363$<br>$p = 0.022$ |
| Illness               | 16.2%            | 11.2%  | 14.0%                  |                                  |
| Relationships         | 36.3%            | 21.1%  | 29.4%                  |                                  |
| Loss                  | 17.9%            | 34.8%  | 24.7%                  |                                  |
| Material difficulties | 5.0%             | 8.4%   | 8.4%                   |                                  |
| Global problems       | 1.1%             | 1.2%   | 2.0%                   |                                  |
| Intrapersonal         | 0.6%             | 0.6%   | 0.7%                   |                                  |
| Work/study problems   | 0.6%             | 0.6%   | 0.7%                   |                                  |
| Multiple difficulties | 12.3%            | 12.1%  | 12.0%                  |                                  |
| Total                 | 100%             | 100%   | 100%                   |                                  |

of the “anxious-critical” and almost twice as many of the “viable”. In other words, the resilience of families in this cluster manifests itself in the fact that the real challenges for them are the irreplaceable losses of loved ones. Problems in relationships with loved ones are secondary. Representatives of the “emotionally restrained” highlight problems in relationships with loved ones in almost 30 per cent of cases and losses in 24.7 per cent of cases.

There are significant differences between the groups according to the data from K. Adams’ projective technique. More than half of representatives of “viable” families choose “Living space”, then “Shimmering space” and “Opaque space”, and only a small part of them choose “Invisible space”. At the same time, “Opaque” and “Living” spaces are both chosen by more than a third of the “anxious-critical” group. Among the representatives of the “emotionally restrained”, most of them choose “Liv-

ing space”, with “Opaque space” taking second place (Table 6).

Thus, family resilience profiles differ quantitatively only in the parameters of family resilience (high – “viable”, medium – “emotionally restrained”, low – “anxious-critical”). Otherwise, each profile represents a qualitatively unique combination of parameters related to emotional communication and experiencing close relationships. The data from projective technique of K. Adams confirm the results of the questionnaires.

The data show that the differences between the representatives of the two ethnic groups with regard to the characteristics of family resilience, emotional communication within the family and the experience of close relationships are minimal. Regarding the individual vitality resources of the two samples, they are more significant (Table 7).

Table 6

Choice of illustrations of the technique «Spaces of Trees and Light» by representatives of different clusters

| Illustrations       | Anxious-critical | Viable | Emotionally restrained | $\chi^2$ , asymptotic significance |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Living space     | 34.1%            | 56.0%  | 46.5%                  | $\chi^2 = 59.4$<br>$p = 0.000$     |
| 2. Shimmering space | 12.3%            | 21.1%  | 12.3%                  |                                    |
| 3. Opaque space     | 36.3%            | 18.9%  | 26.6%                  |                                    |
| 4. Invisible space  | 17.3%            | 4.0%   | 14.6%                  |                                    |

Table 7

Russian and Belarusian family representatives’ vitality

| Variables       | Russia (from 30 years old)<br><i>M ± SD</i> | Belarus (from 30 years old)<br><i>M ± SD</i> | Mann-Whitney U test | Significance level |
|-----------------|---|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| Involvement     | 18.2 ± 6.75                                 | 17.3 ± 5.9                                   | 30673.5             | 0.066              |
| Control         | 14.3 ± 5.5                                  | 13.0 ± 4.8                                   | 29439.0             | 0.011              |
| Risk acceptance | 10.2 ± 3.9                                  | 9.7 ± 3.7                                    | 31569.5             | 0.184              |
| vitality        | 42.6 ± 14.9                                 | 40.0 ± 13.1                                  | 30100.5             | 0.031              |
|                 | Russia (from 31 years old)                  | Belarus (from 31 years old)                  | Mann-Whitney U test | Significance level |
| Involvement     | 21. ± 5.6                                   | 20.1 ± 5.3                                   | 5360.0              | 0.174              |
| Control         | 14.4 ± 4.6                                  | 14.2 ± 4.0                                   | 5929.5              | 0.800              |
| Risk acceptance | 11.0 ± 3.4                                  | 10.5 ± 3.6                                   | 5710.5              | 0.496              |
| vitality        | 46.5 ± 12.3                                 | 44.8 ± 11.4                                  | 5538.0              | 0.311              |

In contrast to the Belarusian sample, the younger age group of the Russian sample shows higher levels of vitality in the control and general vitality parameters. No such differences were found in two subsamples of Russians and older Belarusians. This is in line with data from previous studies [13]. In general, the data obtained on family resilience and individual vitality require a thorough understanding.

## Discussion

The study revealed a significant similarity of Russian and Belarusian family resilience profiles, manifested in the even distribution of both countries' representatives in clusters. We can say that the family resilience profiles of Russian and Belarusian families are similar due to the absence of differences in the indicators of family resilience between the representatives of the two countries and their even distribution in the clusters of "anxious-critical", "viable" and "emotionally restrained".

The similarity of family resilience, emotional communication, and experience of close relationships among representatives of Russian and Belarusian families, along with differences in individual vitality revealed only among younger subgroups partially confirm our hypothesis. Some of our assumptions concerning the cultural and historical origin of the revealed differences were confirmed. Representatives of the older age groups of Russians and Belarusians grew up and were formed as individuals in a common cultural-historical space, unlike the younger age groups whose lives were in the post-USSR period [13].

It is also reasonable to assume that the differences in vitality of young people in the Russian and Belarusian samples are the result of interaction between family resilience and specific historical and social conditions in the structure of the research participants' social development situation. It is also possible that the tragic history of Belarus, which is more pronounced in comparison to that of Russia, is a mediator of a higher assessment of the intensity of a negative event, which is itself a sign of lower vitality. This conclusion is indirectly confirmed by the study of M.N. Efremenkova and co-authors [3], who showed that in Belarusian students' social perceptions the present of their country is much more connected with the past than in the case of Russian students, who in their turn make a stronger connection between the present of Russia and its future.

It is likely that family spirituality as a resource for family resilience is also more pronounced in the Russian sample, as Russians have a more distinct ethno-confessional identity, unlike Belarus, where two confessions (Catholicism and Orthodoxy) have been in

conflict for centuries. At the same time, Russian families are more characterized by the elimination of emotions and the pursuit of external well-being, which is confirmed by the fact that Russians are more likely to choose a drawing that symbolizes doubt, fear of the family and rejection by others. Further research is needed into the reasons for the combination of these characteristics.

## Conclusion

The data obtained confirmed our hypothesis about the greater similarity of family resilience among representatives of the two ethnic groups and more marked differences in individual vitality among adolescents. It is fair to say that the similarity of peoples' historical fates determines the similarity of historical narratives, which, mediated by family history, are reflected in family narratives and become an important factor in the formation of family resilience. However, individual vitality is also influenced by many specific historical and social factors, reflected in differences in this characteristic between Russian and Belarusian youth, with no significant differences between older age groups. Perhaps the reason is that older generations of Russians and Belarusians are more united by the country's common history than youth.

The family resilience profiles identified in our study can be widely used in cross-cultural family studies to characterize family resilience and the social situation of family personal development, as well as in individual and family counseling. The projective technique according to K. Adams provides important information to characterize the social situation more complete. In general, the obtained data testify to complex interrelations of family, concrete-historical and social factors of social developmental situation in which vitality is formed.

Limitations of the study include a small overall sample size and a relatively small sample of older Belarusians. It is desirable to conduct further research in this direction on age-balanced samples. Clarification of the content of the historical narrative in the consciousness of the representatives of the studied peoples is also necessary for cross-cultural research.

## Findings

The study revealed a significant similarity in the resilience profiles of Russian and Belarusian families, largely explained by the two nations' common history and similar cultures. Differences emerged in spirituality as a resource for family resilience, elimination of emotions, and tendency to demonstrate the family's exter-

nal well-being. Belarusians rated negative life events higher. Older Russians and Belarusians do not differ in their individual vitality, whereas such differences are pronounced between younger Russian and Belarusian samples.

The revealed differences in how the participants with different family resilience profiles perceived their childhood situation are significant in the context of psychological support for families in general and individual family members in particular.

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# Psychology of Laughter in a Structural-Dialectical Approach

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The article is devoted to the discussion of the psychology of laughter from the perspective of its functional purpose in culture. Addressing the topic of laughter is due to the need of describing its counterintuitive nature, consisting of dialectical contradictions. The study of the laughter formation in the children's subculture and its inclusion in the subject area of developmental psychology is of immediate interest. The purpose of the study is to determine the psychological significance of laughter in culture as a system of normative situations. We assumed that in a normative situation as in a biosocial unit of culture, laughter will manifest itself as a phenomenon of a binary nature, containing relations of contrast. The structural-dialectical method of analysis, which consists in the search for contrast, made it possible to build an explanatory model of the phenomenon under study. In the capacity of binary pairs in the study of laughter as a psychological phenomenon, such antinomies as “freedom-fear”, “good-evil”, “world-antiworld” were singled out. Laughter as a psychological phenomenon has a dialectical structure in which fear gives rise to the desire for freedom; the cultural mission of laughter is associated with the discovery of evil as a violation of the norm and good as the inviolability of culture. The condition for overcoming fear and achieving illusory freedom through laughter is the displacement of evil into the unreal world, which leads to the supra-situation of the subject.

**Keywords:** structural-dialectical method, laughter, normative situation, cultural congruence.

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# Психология смеха в структурно-диалектическом подходе

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Статья посвящена обсуждению психологии смеха с точки зрения ее функционального предназначения в культуре. Обращение к теме смеха обусловлено необходимостью описания его парадоксальной природы, состоящей из диалектических противоречий. Актуальным является исследование становления смеха в детской субкультуре и включение его в предметную область психологии развития. Целью данного исследования стало определение психологического значения смеха в культуре как системе нормативных ситуаций. Мы предположили, что в нормативной ситуации как биосоциальной единице культуры смех проявляется как феномен бинарной природы, содержащий отношения противоположностей. Структурно-диалектический метод анализа, заключающийся в поиске противоположностей, позволил выстроить объяснительную модель изучаемого феномена. В качестве бинарных пар при исследовании смеха как психологического явления были выделены антиномии «свобода—страх», «добро—зло», «мир—антимир». Смех как психологический феномен имеет диалектическую структуру, в которой страх порождает стремление к свободе; культурная миссия смеха связана с обнаружением зла — как нарушения нормы и добра — как незыблемости культуры. Условием преодоления страха и достижения иллюзорной свободы через смех выступает вытеснение зла в нереальный мир, что ведет к надситуативности субъекта.

**Ключевые слова:** структурно-диалектический метод, смех, нормативная ситуация, культурная конгруэнтность.

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## Introduction

The role of laughter is difficult to assess rationally, as it seems to be an excessive phenomenon in human culture. At first glance, the irrationality and futility of laughter are obvious. There is a well-known Aristotelian assessment of the ridiculous, where he notes that “...the ridiculous is a certain error and ugliness, but painless and harmless...” [2, p. 650]. At the same time, the history of mankind convinces us of the paradoxical vitality of laughter. An accidental phenomenon in a culture is unlikely to have persisted in it for so long.

Laughter has long been the subject of interdisciplinary research. L.F. Balina writes about the role of laughter in culture, noting that laughter protects the integrity of culture and is a measure of the correlation of an individ-

ual's actions with the requirements of society. Through laughter, a deep, subtle, emotionally colored harmony of the individual and social in a person is achieved [4].

Following the anthropologist A.G. Kozintsev we'll agree that laughter is a phenomenon on the border between biology and culture. The scientist suggests that it is necessary to differentiate between “animal” laughter and “sentimental” laughter [17]. It is quite clear that laughter cannot be reduced to the physiology of laughter. A.G. Kozintsev emphasizes that it is much more productive to study laughter as a consequence of the meaningful unit of culture — humor. At the same time, he, referring to Propp [23], notes that the laugher has a “due instinct” — an understanding of the totality of acquired cultural norms. Laughter, according to the author, is an attribute of humor as a game in violation of learned norms. One of the world's



leading scientists, T.S. Veatch, quite clearly introduces the cultural norm into the discourse of the funny, Veatch [40]. For Veatch, the theory of humor is inseparable from the context of the culture in which the funny is created in relation to the cultural norm. In his initial assessments of the mechanism of humor, a well-known researcher in the area under discussion, V. Raskin, notes that the semantic model of humor is built around the contradiction between two opposing connotations of one situation. Humor is based on a resource of knowledge, vital scripts. It is the contradiction that is the source of the experience of content as the unity of the factual and counterfactual meaning of the situation [39]. This idea is consistent with our interpretation of culture as a system of normative situations [10]. When creating humor as a source of laughter, there appears a scenario of playing with the norm [9]. Based on this understanding of culture, we've formulated a hypothesis about the psychology of laughter as a cultural phenomenon that manifests itself in a situation of violation of the norm. By developing the idea of the connection between laughter and cultural norms, we for the first time expect to discover the contradictions that initiate the laughter of a person as a subject of culture. This text is devoted to the theoretical analysis of laughter in the context of culture as a system of normative situations.

Laughter, according to G.L. Tulchinsky, "...does not destroy the foundations of culture, but allows you to better feel them, create prerequisites for a new understanding of social reality and your place in it" [27, p. 34]. A.G. Kozintsev identifies two fundamental human new acquisitions "against which laughter is directed: against speech and against cultures [17].

If laughter accompanies a culture for many centuries, then there is a high probability that there is a need for laughter from culture itself. In this regard, one of the modern philosophers L.V. Karasev writes that behind laughter "...there was nothing but a thin layer of self-comprehending culture" [15, p. 43]. The historical incorruptibility of the funny inclines us towards a deeper psychological study of laughter from the point of view of the interaction between the subject and culture, with many questions about who is laughing and what is being laughed at. The origins of laughter are similar to those of myth, which "...arises involuntarily, obeying the forces that squeezed it "from the outside". In this sense, the myth is a child of necessity, not of freedom" [16, p. 68]. To a certain extent, culture gives a priori carte blanche to laughter, being sure of its good intentions for its own self-preservation. In other words, laughter is not a threat to the culture, and it may seem that it is on the leash of culture. This makes laughter similar to the myth, which, according to B. Malinovsky, is responsible for preserving cultural traditions and is functionally significant for culture. Laughter and myth are located in the space of the border of contact between culture and the subject, solving historical problems of culture translation and its generation [20].

In the subject area of psychological research, laughter finds a place to a lesser extent than the myth, fairy tale, or narrative. Among the few works on the psychology of laughter, there are studies by O.M. Popova on the peculiarities of the sense of the comical in preschool children [22]; the comical in the system of behavior regulation was considered by M.V. Borodenko [9]; the role of humor in extreme conditions of life was studied by N.P. Dedov [13]. Quite a lot has been written about laughter in an interdisciplinary context, so, referring to a poet's apt expression, without harassing "thousands of tons of verbal ore", we will focus on the argument of its expediency in culture from the point of view of a structural-dialectical approach [10]. For the analysis of laughter, we did not choose it accidentally. First, the structural-dialectical approach is based on dialectics, and this circumstance allows us to successfully study rather complex phenomena, which is repeatedly shown in the works of L.S. Vygotsky [12].

On the understanding of culture as a system of normative situations, the aim of this study was to determine the psychological significance of laughter in culture. Laughter is paradoxical and contradictory, so we consider the structural-dialectical approach as the most relevant for the analysis of laughter. O.A. Shiyan, in his work on the funny and scary in children's narratives, emphasizes that dialectics has a strong instrumental resource for revealing complex phenomena, and "...the dialectical method clearly becomes necessary in cases where it is necessary to explain transitions from the available to the possible" [30, p. 46]. There is a well-known theory of contradiction, according to which the comical is revealed only when there is a potential conflict of contradictory components in it (A. Schopenhauer, G. Hegel, F. Fischer). Secondly, the structural-dialectical approach is able to explain laughter in a particularly precise way in the context of culture. When defining culture itself, let us turn to that part of scientific thought in which culture is understood through the prism of its normativity (V.S. Bibler, I.B. Bobneva, N.E. Veraksa, Yu.M. Lotman, A.I. Rozov, M.M. Rubinstein, P.A. Sorokin) [8; 11; 19; 24; 26]. Thus, culture, in our opinion, acts primarily as "...a set of typical situations with a set of standard methods of activity prescribed by norms" [10, p. 86]. The key unit of culture is the normative situation, defined as "...a combination of factors, conditions and circumstances in relation to which society prescribes certain actions to the subject" [10, p. 86]. The normative situation exists objectively, outside the subject, but the subject, getting into a normative situation, acts in accordance with the norms set in it, in a normalized way. In our opinion, a given norm that manifests itself in a normative situation is the most important source and cause of laughter generation. After all, a person who acts outside the norm is either blamed or ridiculed [19]. Such a detailed description of the normative situation as a unit of cultural analysis is not accidental, since it is precisely this situation that causes laughter and contains "...a cultural norm (whether it is a rule of behavior in a

public place, a mathematical formula, a piece of music, etc. It has an energy component within itself, which expresses the intensity of the natural principle in the individual, which is limited by this cultural norm. <...> the cultural norm, or culture, is a tense biosocial system in which the natural is opposed to the social" [10, p. 90]. The thing is that the need to define behavior by prescription arises at the point of conflict, in other words, where interests collide. In other words, the rule is required in a tense situation. The prescription channels this tension, turning it into socially acceptable behavior, which is what characterizes the cultural norm. Moreover, the tension of the cultural norm is manifested in the fact that the need is objectified in the normative situation. Therefore, the fulfillment of the prescription is somehow connected with the satisfaction of the need. Given the Yerkes-Dodson law and the concept of emotional reaction proposed by P. Fress, built on the basis of this law, it is logical to assume that a violation of the execution of an order causes an emotional reaction in the form of laughter. P. Fress wrote: "in the set that causes strong motivation, or, more precisely, excessive motivation, is the cause of emotional reactions" [29, p. 137]. Confirmation of the involvement of nature of laughter in the cultural norm is, for example, the theory of deviation from the norm (Gross, E. Obuer), according to which the comical arises at the time of violation of generally accepted cultural norms and rules of behavior. Cultural expectations are always associated with the conformity of behavior to norms, an example of which is the process of socialization of a child, aimed at the formation of cultural congruence [31]. The spectrum of rules of behavior, with all its diversity, has an invariant series, typical for a particular age. Assessing the success of socialization, they determine cultural congruence – the degree of compliance of the child's behavior with the rules typical for his social situation of development. Non-compliance of behavior with generally accepted rules is a clear reason for laughter, which is especially pronounced in children's subculture [3; 30]. The growing ability to distance oneself and maintain a sense of security with age allows us to perceive more and more violations as comical [25], and laughter allows us to distance ourselves from fear and anxiety [14].

Laughter can be used not only for a kind of verification of compliance of behavior to social norms, but also to force to fulfill them, exercising indirect control over the behavior of others [36; 38], and revealing the subject's attitude towards the imposed norms [33]. Laughter allows us to touch upon and discuss various topics that are forbidden in culture [37], and often plays a positive role in society, acting as an indirect and somewhat sanctioned way of destruction, as opposed to directly satisfying the corresponding antisocial desires [28].

A joke often involves violating various norms: practical, epistemological, and aesthetic. Very often, humor – is a reaction to situations or images that are disharmonious, disproportionate, asymmetrical, and disorderly. We

often laugh at the ugly and disharmonious, or at things that disrupt our sense of order or unity. The advantage of laughter is that it reflects the categorization of those norms that are violated in culture. It is precisely when certain norms are violated that successful jokes can reveal a new facet of the nature of the norm itself, its structure and application [35]. Laughter exposes the meaninglessness of certain social relations, a deviation from social norms [23].

### **The Dialectics of Laughter in the Cultural Antinomy of Freedom and Fear**

Starting on the path of the structural-dialectical approach, it is necessary to identify those opposites through which dialectics is able to explain laughter as a complex phenomenon that occurs in the context of culture. An indication of the key antinomy related to laughter, – the juxtaposition of freedom and fear-is found in M.M. Bakhtin's classic work "The Work of Francois Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance". The behavior of a medieval person was strictly regulated, which excluded laughter as an opportunity to show his freedom. Fear bound the laughter of the medieval man, so everywhere in the official sites of culture, including literature, laughter was rejected, but remained an island of hope for freedom. Bakhtin directly writes about this as follows: "It was the victory over fear that medieval people felt most acutely in laughter. And it was felt not only as a victory over mystical fear ("the fear of God") and over the fear of the forces of nature – but, above all, as a victory over the moral fear that binds, oppresses and obscures the consciousness of man: the fear of everything sanctified and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo")" [5, p. 104]. Bakhtin sees carnival culture as a force capable of breaking cultural taboos, with the caveat that the medieval person returns to reality after the carnival, which does not give up hope of freedom. Laughter in carnival culture, in our opinion, aggravates the lack of freedom, ridiculing those who encroach on the foundations of culture and its norms, convincing the medieval man of the futility of his anti-cultural intentions. The idea that laughter is a path to post-carnival compounded unfreedom, is a rejection of Bakhtin's view of the nature of the medieval carnival and its laughter culture as "freedom granted by laughter." However, as Averintsev argued, "...coming out of agreement with Bakhtin, you will not lose it; coming out of a dialogical situation – you will lose it" [1, p. 7]. The laughter of a medieval person was, in essence, a path to even greater unfreedom, than which was before the carnival, in Averintsev's words, – "a special moment of the lack of freedom" [1, p. 8]. Laughter guards cultural norms just like the Inquisition, it only creates the illusion of freedom, because "...behind laughter there is never violence, laughter does not build bonfires" [5, p. 109]. The

fact that laughter is not an unselfish product of culture is also noted by Bakhtin himself: "Wine barrels will burst if you do not open the holes from time to time and do not let air in them. All of us humans — ill-made barrels that will burst with the wine of wisdom if this wine is kept in a continuous fermentation of reverence and fear of God. You need to give it air so that it does not spoil. That is why we allow ourselves to be buffoons (stupidity) on certain days, in order to return to the service of the Lord with all the greater zeal" [5, p. 87]. It is not by chance that Averintsev addresses Bakhtin the question of why Christ did not laugh [1]. For Averintsev himself, the answer is obvious: "Christ does not laugh, because at the point of absolute freedom laughter is impossible, because it is superfluous" [1, p. 9]. Following the logic of this answer, it can be argued that laughter is a sign of unfreedom, which contradicts Bakhtin's statements about "laughter". Christ stands on an extra-expert position, which was clearly expressed in the Sermon on the Mount: do not judge, so that you will not be judged. Laughter, to a certain extent, can be seen as a humanistic gesture of culture, as a way of translating norms in a nonviolent way: in laughter, "...the transition from unfreedom to freedom introduces a moment of some new unfreedom. But something else is much more important: by definition, it implies unfreedom" [1, p. 9]. This becomes clear when we refer to the jester as the subject of laughter. The fool, as the author of humor and the initiator of laughter, takes an expert position: for him, the norm is clearly reflected, and he is sensitive to any violations of it. Making fun of the violator, the joker acts as a guardian of norm preservation, turning the violator into an object of laughter. D.S. Likhachev very accurately describes the cultural purpose of the jester in the Old Russian laughing culture — the one who "makes a fool of himself": "What is an Old Russian fool? This is often a very smart person, but doing what is not supposed to, violating custom, decency, accepted behavior, exposing himself and the world from all ceremonial forms, showing his nakedness and the nakedness of the world — a whistleblower and unmasking at the same time, a violator of the sign system, a person who mistakenly uses it" [18, p. 19]. Consequently, culture needs a laughing reflection of its world order as a prevention of doom and destruction. "In smiling and laughing," Karasev writes, "we make our own assessment of the world without forcing it to change, and if the world does change, then it happens in its own order and because laughter has knowledge of what the world should really be like" [15, p. 30]. Laughter appears in culture not for the sake of freedom, but to strengthen cultural shackles. The antinomy "freedom and fear" in laughter as a cultural phenomenon shows that there is a trap hidden in it — the illusion of freedom, leading a person to the fear of being violated by a cultural norm and ridiculed. This is similar, according to Averintsev, to "...the temptation to hold some talisman in your hand — laughter, acte gratuit — to grasp it, as, according to the Russian proverb, a

drowning person grasps at straws, and believe that as long as you feel it in your hand, freedom is not lost" [1, p. 17].

Contrasting freedom and fear in laughter, it is important to note that freedom itself in the context of culture is understood not as permissiveness, but rather as a certain degree of cultural trust, approval and non-punishability associated with human security in culture. Then freedom as security is a state before laughter and before fear, and fear and laughter stand side by side, since laughter occurs at a time when culture has risks of destroying its norms. From the antinomy of freedom and fear, laughter is preferred to fear, which once bound the Bakhtin medieval man for the sake of preserving cultural norms and does not let go of the shackles in subsequent centuries, since laughter is generated for the sake of fear. Translating this idea into everyday life, let us recall those who violate the foundations of culture, introducing new norms into it — and these people become ridiculous — "cranks", "crazy", "fools". All these roles mean a loss of social position in culture, which is close to depersonalization. This subtle moment of cultural repression is described by Yu. M. Lotman [19]. This is the cruel mission of laughter for a person as a subject of culture in its normative content. To put it bluntly, we can say that laughter is the bullying of culture. The strategy of discrediting the image of the interlocutor is aimed at excluding him from the "circle of friends", sharply lowering his status. "An awkward situation that an opponent finds himself in is a source of joy from the damage caused to the author of the statement and at the same time deprives the object of the joke of respect and authority" [7, p. 101]. In addition, it was found that adolescents using aggressive humor themselves were more likely to experience social anxiety, fear, and social loneliness [32], young people aged 12 to 21, as shown in one study, who are less likely to show anger, tend, to use adaptive humor styles, and less likely to use aggressive humor [34]. It is known that the "ritual violation of norms", joint pleasure from "unexpected violation of social order, which is done "frivolously" and "temporarily"; "laughter as a rest from cultural norms" make the social environment safer [21, p. 58]. The antinomy of fear and freedom in the context of a normative situation gave rise to laughter as a phenomenon that develops the subject of culture.

### **The Juxtaposition of Good and Evil in the Ridiculous**

The next antinomy — the juxtaposition of good and evil in the understanding of the nature of laughter- is just as explicit as the antinomy of fear and freedom. This dialectical moment is noted as a tense but ambiguous confrontation between evil and laughter: "...laughter reflects evil in its mirror and therefore it involuntarily becomes something like it" [15, p. 39].

Laughter is a response to evil, but evil is not absolute, though evil as a danger, understood by culture itself as a threat to violate its own norms. Laughter acts as a way of countering such an anti-cultural evil. Laughter, located on the border of culture, stands on its guard and arises when there is a danger threatening the cultural norm: "Laughter always goes next to evil-then moving away, then approaching it, and this connection makes itself felt in all its manifestations, starting from the most subtle aphorisms and ending with the coincidence of the designations of laughter and "evil" grins in many European languages" [15, p. 33]. Paradoxically, the delegate of culture who "sees the essence and measure of evil" is the one who produces laughter — the buffoon. He sees evil while being suprasituative, which is accurately reflected in the well-known song:

"I 'm a jester, I 'm a Harlequin, I —'m just a laugh,  
Without a name and, in general, without fate.  
What do you really care about those  
Who you came to have fun with?"

Bakhtin notes that "the fool is a disenfranchised bearer of objectively abstract truth", the fool proclaims "universal truth", using laughter [5, p. 106]. The jester, who has shrewdly seen evil, shoots an arrow of laughter at it, but at the same time "the laughing person himself is often not cheerful" [15, p. 43]. Laughter is preceded by the threat of cultural destruction, which delegates a jester who can detect evil and ridicule it. The fool turns evil into a "merry bogeyman" [5, p. 432]. Of course, — the buffoon, dressed up in grotesque images, is only a symbol of the mission of its guardian addressed to culture. If the one who laughs, as Averintsev puts it, holds laughter in his hands as a talisman of illusory freedom, then the fool seizes evil in his hands and drowns it in laughter. It turns out that evil, like the risk of cultural transformation and renewal, is destroyed by laughter, instilling fear in the person being laughed at. Laughter arises as a detection of evil that carries risks to culture. Classic in this sense is the ridiculed Hamlet, who encroached on the foundations of Elsinore, turned into a madman, ridiculous and disenfranchised [6]. Evil as an encroachment on transformation, as the ambition of the creator with his eternal "to be or not to be?" becomes a victim of all-conquering laughter.

### **The Suprasituativeness of the Ridiculous in the Contradiction of the Real and the Unreal**

Fear and evil, paradoxically enough, are antitheses that have defeated freedom and good, and are essential to the nature of laughter. However, laughter, along with its rational purpose in culture, also has an aesthetic, irrational component, which manifests itself in the antinomy of the real and the unreal. The antinomy of the real and unreal in laughter is due to the fact that, most often,

laughter is detected at the moment when evil moves from the place where it was, to another, usually the opposite. The subject who turns the fear and evil of culture into unreality gains suprasituative freedom. On the one hand, it is the same freedom over fear. On the other hand, the ridiculous in unrealistic circumstances becomes unattainable, distant, and from that, visible from the outside.

Laughter often occurs when the context of evil changes. All the "make-believe", "reverse", and "upside-down" techniques known in humor are no more than techniques that allow you to grotesquely show evil. For example, in Old Russian laughter, it is customary for the fool to turn his clothes outwards, putting on his hats backwards. These actions of the fool are a pathetic and audacious display of his violation of cultural norms, followed by his adventures in the "wrong world". For culture, a clear alternative to laughter is the repression of evil, as evidenced by the history of attitudes to freethinking. Here it can be noted that repression and laughter have the same purpose, which is to preserve the foundations of culture, but repression and laughter have different traces. Repression leaves vital fear, and laughter — social, cultural. "Laughter is a change of vision, a change of glasses that allows you to see the world every time from such a distance that it will look safe and funny; laughter — is a work with the space of meaning, thanks to which evil loses its effectiveness, in other words, it appears in a form that has the opposite effect on its very essence, in the form of which excesses this essence and deprives it of meaning" [15, p. 31].

In order for evil to be funny, it is necessary to see it in unreal, unusual circumstances. D.S. Likhachev calls such unrealistic circumstances "the world of anti-culture": "The following scheme of the construction of the universe is typical for Old Russian parodies. The universe is divided into a real, organized, cultural world, and a non-real, non-organized, negative, anti-cultural world" [18, p. 16]. Evil as an encroachment on cultural norms, bold, strong and terrible, in new circumstances should become weak, confused and ridiculous. Then the mission of laughter can be considered complete.

### **Conclusions**

The structural-dialectical approach to assessing the psychology of laughter reveals the nature of laughter as a cultural phenomenon generated by the interaction of the subject and the rule in a normative situation: the funny appears at the moment of the violation of the norm as a repressive cultural reaction.

When discussing a laughter reaction to a violation of the norm, one should keep in mind the "energetic" aspect of the normative situation. From a dialectical point of view, a norm is introduced when a need arises for it. In other words, the normative situation itself latently contains a conflict between the individual and society, which can manifest itself in the form of the indicated an-

tinomies. That is why a cultural norm is introduced to overcome this conflict. Thus, according to the structural-dialectical point of view, violation of the norm causes conflict experiences in the form of an emotional reaction.

Laughter is a consequence of contrasting the antinomies of fear and freedom, good and evil, the real and unreal; laughter initiates fear as a prevention of deviations in cultural norms; for laughter, violation of cultural congruence acts as an evil that destroys the normative architecture of culture.

The aesthetic form of the ridiculous, which goes back to the antinomy of the real and unreal, allows the subject

to move the situation of a threat to cultural integrity to an unreal world — to a carnival, to a shifter, and vice versa.

Laughter implies cultural expediency in terms of broadcasting and preserving cultural norms, so the problem of the comical requires studying in children's subculture from the point of view of the development of both means and forms of the comical at different stages of socialization in ontogenesis; the study of the comical in the field of child psychology opens up new opportunities for understanding the mechanisms of forming a child's behavior in a normative situation.

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*MEMORABLE DATES*  
*ПАМЯТНЫЕ ДАТЫ*

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## To The 75th Anniversary of Vitaly Rubtsov “Nothing Here Is Complete Without Me, and Nothing Has Had Time to Become One”

The anniversary of psychologist Vitaly Rubtsov is an occasion to reveal the originality of his way of thinking in his scientific and practical activity. This essay does not claim to be a full biographical sketch. The author only connects the intellectual biography of the celebrant with the logic of the history of science.

**Keywords:** V.V. Rubtsov, V.V. Davydov, Psychological Institute of RAE, MSUPE, thinking, picture of the world, physics, learning activity, collective and individual subject.

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Behold, I will do a new thing; Now it shall spring forth...  
I will even make a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

*The Prophet Isaiah*

October 20th is the 75th anniversary of Vitaly Rubtsov. He is a founder, the first dean, the president of MSUPE, and the head of the International UNESCO Chair on “Cultural and Historical Psychology of Childhood” (MSUPE), an academician of RAO. Vitaly Rubtsov is a feat of Russian and Soviet psychology and education, a student and follower of the

“deeds and thoughts” of his teacher, Dr. Vasily Davydov. Rubtsov took over from him the baton of teaching in his scientific school at Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Dr. Davydov handed him over the governance of the Institute for the next 20 years, using term “deeds and thoughts” the way Davydov did. He is a rare case when the



list of academic ranks (far from being complete) reflects the scale of his personality and professional achievements. He got them due to his work. How did it happen that a graduate of the physics and energy department of the legendary Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, who could have made a brilliant career in physics, found himself at the “front door of Russian psychology” (as V.P. Zinchenko called the Psychological Institute on Mokhovaya Street)? It was destiny. But what is destiny? Unpredictable “determination by purpose”, as opposed to “determination by cause”. Strangely enough, precisely physics brought young Vitaly Rubtsov to psychology. There is no visible reason for a physicist to study psychology. But there can be quite a “visible” purpose. Vitaly Rubtsov, studying superconductivity, saw through the digital microscope the content of ideas [1]. We don’t invent such microscopes, they have already been created by thoughts capable of seeing the invisible and strengthening this vision with special tools. Before the Galilean “observer” there must have been a “thinker”! But where does the “thinker” come from? Spinoza suggests: if you want to understand the essence of a thing, construct it. Kant would later develop it in his own way into the “activity approach” (its first philosophical version).

This is how young physicist Vitaly Rubtsov faced the problem that stirred his science at the crossroads of the 19th and 20th centuries in disputes about quantum mechanics and general theory of relativity, which has not lost its acuteness until now. On the contrary if we look at the life of the modern human and his mixed reality with the constant mutual expansion of “digitals” in the “undigitized” and “undigitalizable”. Later, Rubtsov and his team will address this problem and will be the first to propose a scientific solution from the standpoint of activity theory. Rubtsov's team (Michael Cole and his group will do it in the USA) will show that it is not so much the digitalization of education that “challenges” the activity approach as the activity approach challenges digitalization, and that without incorporating IT into a full-fledged learning activity, the methods of which will themselves require digital tools for their construction, we should not expect any special breakthroughs. It will only give us the development of “programmed learning” on the basis of neo-behaviorist ideas of linear (B.F. Skinner) or branched programming (N.A. Crowder, S. Pressy).

But that’ll be in the 1980s. In the meantime, matter has not “disappeared”! We say “picture of the world”, or “scientific picture”. These are concepts, not metaphors. But if there is a “picture”, then there is an “artist”, an author, a creator. In Soviet times there was a curious case. In the early 1960s, the famous collection “Philosophical Encyclopedia” was being

prepared for publication, it was a bibliophile's dream to have one at home. And here one of the authors, if I am not mistaken, E.V. Ilyenkov wrote something like, “Atoms have not changed since the time of Democritus, but during this time several physical pictures of the world have changed”. The vigilant editor, who obviously learned dialectics not from Hegel, but from the textbook of Marxism-Leninism, was puzzled. How come? According to Engels, “the so-called objective dialectics reigns everywhere”, and dialectics is the doctrine of development. So he added, “Since the time of Democritus, atoms essentially have not changed...” The editor clearly didn’t know about the “epistemological revolution” that Immanuel Kant made, introducing into the picture of the world the concept of an epistemic agent — the author, the constructor of this picture. Kant was inspired by the Scottish thinker David Hume (by the way, Kant was a Scott from his mother’s side, but it does not explain the influence of Hume on him). But a century before Hume, Spinoza formulated this concept of knowing the essence of things in their creation, the activity of producing things, that’s when the very agent of creation was born. Hegel and Marx would build their philosophy upon this idea. In this philosophy, all human knowledge is reflexive; it is “knowledge about knowledge” and the knowledge about how it is being produced, extracted, generated, formed, and created. It’s knowledge about how it is transmitted through the centuries from generation to generation as a “creation”, it can appear only within a human community, and it reflects the historical regularities of life to the same extent as the laws of the structure of the world do.

Therefore, the immutable physical laws of reality can be understood only in the logic of the development of the theoretical thinking of physicists (and not only!) about these laws. It means already that school teaching of physics without the development of theoretical thinking on the examples of physical thought can hardly claim full scientificity. In the times of Einstein and Bohr, we forced schoolchildren to study physics from the position of Galileo's observer, stating the natural order of things, which we never encountered in life.

All this is very important in order to understand the initial motivation and scientific vector of psychologist Rubtsov. His first product was an experimental course on physics for grades 6 and 7. With these ideas, Rubtsov came to E.V. Ilyenkov (Rubtsov’s wife studied with his daughter). Ilyenkov addressed him to his closest friend, Vasily Davydov, who was a head of the laboratory of the young schoolkids at the Psychological Institute.

Rubtsov joined Davydov’s team at a very important moment. In the early 1970s, there was a

change — a reassessment of research priorities. From the study of theoretical generalization Davydov and his collaborators moved to the study of learning activity, its nature, structure, and development. Learning together, children develop communication forms that led them later to theoretical generalization. Davydov formulated it simply: a general (theoretical) way of action for solving a wide range of problems cannot be found unless it becomes common for a given school class, a group of students. Otherwise, its search will be meaningless. This is how L.S. Vygotsky's concept of the unity of generalization and communication was implemented in the activity content (this is the “junction” of the cultural-historical approach and the activity theory). Rubtsov was among the pioneers of studying this, together with G.A. Tsukerman, B.D. Elkonin, G.G. Kravtsov, and E.E. Shuleshk. But his research had a special direction, which would later be called socio-genetic psychology.

Figuratively speaking, thinking is when you, without realizing it, start speaking from the perspective of all intelligent people (in this case, physicists) who have ever lived on the globe, but with a questioning tone. And then you switch to the affirmative in your little solo part. And you can't hear the combined choir behind you. But a person with truncated thinking ability has a crowd screaming from his mouth, and it seems that he is too much. And to him, he is very big, and the bigger he feels, the louder the crowd in his mouth.

As V. Bibler would say (with him Davydov and Rubtsov were in a constant dialog-discussion), thinking is not so much a conversation with oneself as with others in oneself, they come from books, from life, from imagination. Sometimes quite unexpected interlocutors join the conversation, and you cannot simply “ask” them out of the discussion, even though you are the one who sets the rules. Sometimes old like-minded friends start saying unexpected, “strange” things. The creativity of theoretical thinking consists in comprehending these “surprises” and in trying to get to the source of these “strange things”.

The collective subject does not “self-liquidate” in the individual, but continues to live his own special “inner life”. Meanwhile, the transition from the collective form to the individual, the “interiorization”, has always been considered a key vector of development and had a big educational value. But where does the collective subject go? Does it only “reincarnate” in individual “exteriorizations” or does it stay as a “systemic quality” during the whole development process, the multiple variety of “interiorization-exteriorization” cycles?

The solution of Rubtsov and his followers are in favor of the second. No autonomization, individu-

alization of action, which acquires an independent, free, arbitrary character, is possible if the former form of collectivity is preserved. Individual development of thinking takes place within the developing thinking community. It is not only a student who is thinking, it is the study group, the class, the whole school! But they are thinking in the “developmental mode”. Rubtsov shows that at the level of a class (group) the development is ensured by the unity of the processes of communication, understanding, and reflexion, in which the “external” is constantly transforming into the “internal” and vice versa, when the understanding of things coincides with the mutual understanding of people, children and adults. This mutual understanding can happen only when there is a special way of cooperation in their actions, changing individual psychological positions during the activity. Social psychology cannot exist without genetic psychology, and genetic psychology without social psychology is distanced from the main thing — the source of development, reducing it to its “background”, “atmosphere”, a set of conditions of development. Rubtsov's solution, which is fully consistent with the key concept of L.S. Vygotsky, challenges not only the social psychology of education and development, but social psychology in general.

In the early 1990s, V.V. Rubtsov and A.A. Margolis got an idea to create in Moscow an International Educational and Psychological College (1993). They came to Dr. Davydov and he supported the idea. When they conceived this new form of education, they hardly suspected that the college would grow into world-known leading psychological Moscow State University of Psychology and Education. (MSUPE). In 1996, V.V. Rubtsov transformed the College into a University, it was still a Moscow city university. It would become a state university a decade later, MSUPE had become a known “brand” by that time. Rubtsov has very good organizational skills, in the shortest possible time the best Russian psychologist were invited to work in the new university. Teaching psychologists for science and practical work was combined with new research model on the basis of educational “development standards”.

Rubtsov always say: our University stands on the shoulders of a giant — the Psychological Institute, or rather, giants — scientists, whose labours not only made outstanding scientific breakthroughs in psychology, but also created unique schools, thanks to which these breakthroughs became collective. V.V. Rubtsov is an example of a rare happy coincidence of a scientist and an “organizer of science” in one person. Here is what Vitaly Vladimirovich himself says about it: “I tried to transfer the established culture of the organization of thinking, education, and activity here as a basis for the development and

construction of the system of preparing specialists at this university. Pay attention – the principle of scientific research, which is laid down in the Psychological Institute, here is the principle of education” [1, p. 118].

Both the Psychological Institute and the MSUPE are a living, multi-vocal collective subject of scientific thought and action, in the form of which a whole range of social practices are set today: educational, counselling, accompanying, therapeutic, etc.

The life motto of Rubtsov could be summarized in the words of Rainer Maria Rilke: “Nothing here is complete without me, and nothing has had time to become one”.

I would like to wish to the remarkable scientist Vitaly Rubtsov to have a good and long path under this motto. We have been friends for about 40 years and worked together in the scientific school of Vasily Davydov.

V.T. Kudryavtsev,  
Professor of the UNESCO Department  
“Cultural and Historical Psychology of Childhood“  
MSUPE

*The Editorial Board of the “Cultural-historical psychology“ journal joins in the congratulations and wishes on this wonderful anniversary.*

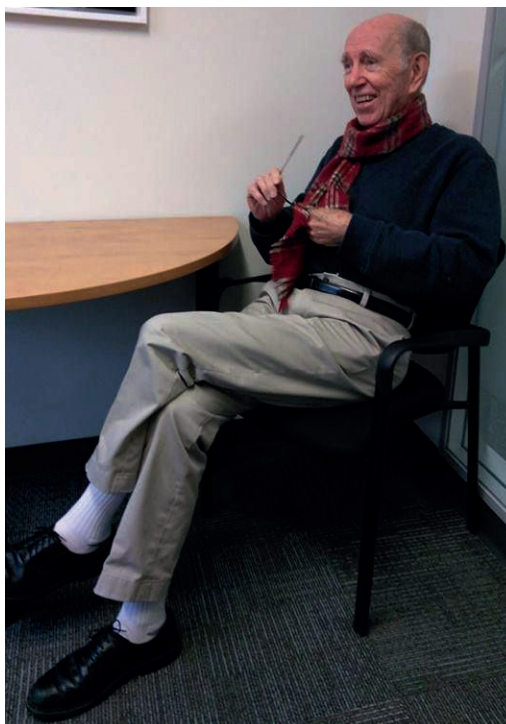
### ***Literature***

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## To the 85th Anniversary of M. Cole

### From The Editors

The 13th of April 2023 is the 85th anniversary of of Michael Cole, a modern devotee, a classic of cultural-historical activity psychology, an emeritus professor at the University of San Diego (USA), a student of Aleksaner Luria, an associate and friend of outstanding Russian scientists Dr. Davydov, Dr. Zinchenko, and Dr. Mikhailov, a member of the Editorial Board of the “Cultural-Historical Psychology” journal. His contribution to the development and internationalization of the cultural-historical approach and activity theory to understanding the nature, laws and mechanisms of human mental life is extremely important. His books and articles have been many times published in Russia.



Michael Cole at Simon Fraser University  
(Vancouver, Canada), March 2017.  
Photo by G.K. Urazalieva. From the personal  
archive of V.T. Kudryavtsev

## To Professor Michael Cole

Dear Michael!

Many years ago, as a young researcher you were planning a scientific internship. In the office building in the city of Bloomington, Indiana, where these internships were processed, you entered the lift and accidentally pressed the wrong button. You came to the office “from where” you were sent to Moscow State University to

work with Alexander Luria. You gave it some thought and made your choice. That confirmed what Salvador Dali said: “Mistakes are of a sacred nature”. Everything what followed that, is a consequence of this wonderful “mistake”.

Without this “mistake”, new and the newest cultural-historical psychology would be different, and the name of its founder, Lev Vygotsky, might not have sounded as

loud and proud to the whole world as it does now. Here you share the merit with Jerome Bruner, Alexander Luria and Gita Vygotskaya. Today, you are the undisputed leader of cultural-historical psychology and an authoritative mentor for many students around the world who have chosen it as their scientific destiny.

It is difficult to imagine the cultural-historical theory created in the USSR without its development within the framework of activity theory. Their relationship cannot be called idyllic; there are divergences on a number of issues, but their genetic kinship is a fact. Today, these two areas unite communities of psychologists from all continents. In Europe, Asia, North and South America, Australia, and now in Africa, new scientific directions are emerging. And everywhere, your name is well known and respected. And you are holding the community and the polyphony of ideas up.

You've built a bridge, bringing Vygotsky's ideas from the 20th century to the 21st century. You still "organize the movement" into what you called "the science of the future", or "romantic science", as your teacher A.R. Luria used to say. One always wants to see the future romantically. But one can also act based on this vision, against all odds. You've always succeeded in this.

The supporting structure of this bridge is the journal "Cultural-Historical Psychology". We are grateful for

your cooperation with the journal and hope for its long and happy continuation!

Please accept our congratulations on your wonderful anniversary!

V.V. Rubtsov,  
President of the Moscow State University of  
Psychology and Education,  
Head of the UNESCO Department at Moscow  
State Pedagogical University.  
"Cultural-Historical Psychology of Childhood"

B.D. Elkonin,  
Editor-in-Chief,  
"Cultural-Historical Psychology" Journal

V.T. Kudryavtsev,  
Professor of the UNESCO Department  
"Cultural-Historical Psychology of Childhood"  
Moscow State Pedagogical University.

*The editorial board of the journal joins this congratulation and wishes for further cooperation, which will undoubtedly bear new good fruits and sow new seeds in the field of cultural-historical psychology, the science and practice of human self-development in the XXI century.*

## My Michael Cole

When I think of Michael Cole, my unreliable memory conjures up the following images. I can't name the year, but by this point I had definitely graduated from the university and started teaching in the Psychology Faculty. From 1972 began my real and ideal interaction with Cole.

I remember being introduced to the energetic red-haired man in the house of Alexander Luria on Frunze Street. Luria said, "This is my student, Michael Cole. We're doing a great many things with him. And you will help him make the Soviet Psychology journal". Cole impressed me; he was so confident in what he was doing. He was and still is the embodiment of a powerful human and intellectual energy. I saw in Cole that he was, messianically speaking, the chosen one. I didn't understand whether he felt this way or not. He was chosen to bring the ideas of Vygotsky and cultural-historical psychology into the world of human knowledge.

Later in my life, I made friends with two scientists, Jim Wertsch and Mike Cole. With Mike, I communicated less, and with Jim, much more. But those two men became family to me. Mike admired Professor Luria in a very special way. Jim also admired Luria, but Jim also admired his supervisor, Aleksei Leontiev, and many other psychologists.

Michael's other social circle, in my perception, consisted of various people; among them were, first and foremost, Vladimir Zinchenko and Joseph Feigenberg. Joseph Feigenberg told Cole in front of me more than once that Bernstein's world was the main world of psychology. Joseph Feigenberg was very skeptical about Leontiev's activity theory, but with Cole he found a much more direct dialogue, and Luria was the psychological subject for that dialogue. And for me, Cole's idea of the artifact is close to Feigenberg's idea of human being completed by the tool. For me, they are more and more complementary to each other.

And then, during all these long years, I met Michael several times. Michael became closer to me. In addition to things related to science, Michael had very warm relationships with Eugene Feigenberg and Grigory Asmolov. And in the last few years, with Michael's help, I've been constantly turning to Vygotsky and comprehending Vygotsky. Thanks to Michael, I feel that Vygotsky is not a distant but a close interlocutor for me. This is the effect that communication with Michael creates and will continue to create.

There was a discussion between Vladimir Zinchenko, Alexander Surmava and myself when translating Cole's book into Russian. It is reflected in "Voprosy

Psychologii”. It was very difficult to translate the title of Cole's book into Russian so that it would be understandable both to us and abroad. Cole said that we had to find a name for Vygotsky's theory. There was a danger, which I pointed out to Cole and Zinchenko, that a number of researchers who were not working within the framework of cultural-historical psychology would take the term “cultural psychology” as cross-cultural psychology. Cole and his co-author Scribner had a different mindset. His thinking is not cross-cultural but cultural-historical. These are different ways of thinking. And what has pleased me in recent years is that his works suddenly helped me to realize that Vygotsky's work is cultural-historical evolutionism a to see his the connection with my work in the field of historical and evolutionary approach.

But it was the discussion about Cole's book on cultural psychology, which Zinchenko and Meshcheryakov had roughly translated as “cultural-historical psychology”, and their discussion with Surmava, in which I intervened, that brought up the term “cultural activity psychology”. Surmava dropped the term “cultural-activity”, and I used it to place two lines of psychology together, Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology and Leontiev's activity psychology. I clearly understood the unity of these two lines, they were like a sapling and its offshoot. And what Surmava dropped

by, I picked up and introduced into psychology. So, this construct came out thanx to Cole, because of the discussion about his book.

There are times when I despair and think: What is the point of what Eugenia Shekhter and I are doing? I feel so lonely in this historical and evolutionary approach. But when I see how today Michael is obsessed with evolutionism... Today, both Michael and I, together with Alexander Poddiakov, are obsessed with the ideas of evolutionism. It means that we have to dig here, as this obsession defines for us our zone of proximal development. Michael didn't cause the historical evolutionary approach, but his discussions of these past years and his construct that he calls “the regeneration of the activity approach” gave me hope that we were moving together. It's a pity that many scientists don't reflect on this.

And if there was no Cole, there would be no such obsession, no cultural-activity term in Russian psychology, and there would be no certainty that we were moving together.

*A.G. Asmolov*

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