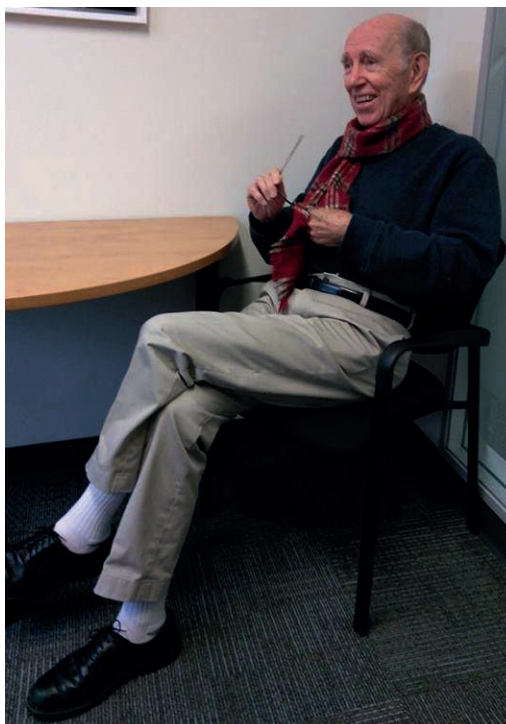


To the 85th Anniversary of M. Cole

From The Editors

The 13th of April 2023 is the 85th anniversary 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.

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