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The thinking body in social space: philosophical foundations of inclusion in the framework of the cultural-historical approach (based on the works of L.S. Vygotsky and E.V. Ilyenkov)

Nina Bagdasarova

American University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

✉ bagdasarova_n@auca.kg

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze how the philosophical ideas of L.S. Vygotsky and E.V. Ilyenkov can be used today to understand and interpret the concept of social inclusion. In his reflections, Ilyenkov relied on Spinoza's ideas that thinking is inseparable from the "thinking body". Although modern discussions of inclusive education more often discuss the concepts of "autonomy", "authenticity" and "embodiment", they paradoxically lack the concept of "subject" which was central to Soviet educational psychology created in the cultural-historical tradition. It can be assumed that the reason for this is an overly rational and intellectualized idea of this "subject". This means that if in this tradition we discuss a child with a disability as a subject of pedagogical influence as a "thinking body", there is a risk that the emphasis will again be on the word "thinking" and not on the word "body". A rationalized arrangement of accents will exclude the idea of "affect" in all discussions of a self-determining subject as the goal of pedagogical influence and child development in general. However, if the goal of education, including inclusive education is to imagine Spinoza's "thinking body" acting in the space of other bodies as a subject, then "subject" may turn out to be the concept that will combine autonomy, authenticity and embodiment. From the point of view of the cultural-historical approach the "thinking body" moves among bodies that are according to Ilyenkov (following Marx) are "non-organic bodies of human". This environment consists almost completely of the objects that were made by humans or adjusted by humans for humans' use. On the other hand, the thinking body moves among other "thinking bodies", that is, in the social environment. It is this movement (which simply cannot be divided into two different types of movement in two different environments) that forms the "thinking body" both as a "body", with its affects and physical reactions and as "thinking" with its understanding of the world and attitude towards it. Using this interpretation of human being is possible to come up with additional aspects for conceptualizing "inclusion"

Keywords: E.V. Ilyenkov, L.S. Vygotsky, Spinoza, intellectual disabilities, "thinking body", social inclusion

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Мыслящее тело в социальном пространстве: философские основания инклюзии в рамках культурно-исторического подхода (по материалам работ Л.С. Выготского и Э.В. Ильенкова)

Н.А. Багдасарова

Американский университет в Центральной Азии, Бишкек, Кыргызстан
Кыргызско-Российский Славянский университет имени Б.Н. Ельцина
✉ bagdasarova_n@auca.kg

Резюме

Целью данного исследования является анализ того, как философские идеи Л.С. Выготского и Э.В. Ильенкова могут быть использованы сегодня для понимания и интерпретации понятия социальной инклюзии. В своих размышлениях Ильенков опирался на идеи Спинозы о том, что мышление неотделимо от «мыслящего тела». При том, что в современных дискуссиях об инклюзивном образовании чаще обсуждаются понятия «автономности», «аутентичности» и «воплощенности», в них парадоксальным образом отсутствует понятие «субъекта», которое было центральным для советской педагогической психологии, созданной в культурно-исторической традиции. Можно предположить, что причиной этого является слишком рациональное и интеллектуализированное представление об этом «субъекте». Это значит, что, если в данной традиции обсуждать ребенка с инвалидностью как субъекта педагогического воздействия в качестве «мыслящего тела», есть риск, что акцент опять окажется на слове «мыслящее», а не на слове «тело». Рационализированная расстановка акцентов исключит представление об «аффекте» во всех рассуждениях о самоопределяющемся субъекте как цели педагогического воздействия и развития человека в целом. Однако если целью образования, включая инклюзивное образование, представить «мыслящее тело» Спинозы, действующее в пространстве других тел, как субъекта, то «субъект» может оказаться тем понятием, которое соберет в себе и автономность, и аутентичность, и воплощенность. С точки зрения культурно-исторического подхода, «мыслящее тело» движется среди тел, которые являются «неорганическими телами человека», т. е. в среде предметной. С другой стороны, мыслящее тело движется среди других «мыслящих тел», т. е. в среде социальной. Именно это движение, которое, в принципе, невозможно разделить на два разных типа движения в двух различных средах, и формирует «мыслящее тело» и как «тело», с его аффектами и физическими реакциями, и как «мыслящее» с его пониманием мира и отношением к нему. Используя такую интерпретацию человека, можно подойти и к дополнительным возможностям концептуализации понятия «инклюзии».

Ключевые слова: Э.В. Ильенков, Л.С. Выготский, Спиноза, интеллектуальные нарушения, «мыслящее тело», социальная инклюзия

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The concept of inclusion came to the Russian-language academia from Western literature, and due to this fact, most authors working with this concept both in theory and practice prefer to conduct discussions about this concept referring to Western philosophers (Shemanov, 2014; Alekhina, Shemanov, 2022). This approach seems logical, since in Russian-language literature this concept has not been directly discussed and has not been the subject of philosophical consideration until recently. The question of whether a term can be considered from the point of view of ideas that existed before its emergence may seem illegitimate, but such an analysis is often the only way to situate a new term

within the generally accepted categories and semantic structures already available in a given community. This text presents an attempt to conceptualize the concept of inclusion, namely social inclusion related to disability, within the framework of cultural-historical approach, using the works of E.V. Ilyenkov and L.S. Vygotsky.

To begin with, it is worth referring to the authoritative definition of the term. Below are definitions from two of the world's most popular dictionaries. The definition from the Cambridge Dictionary is very general and says that inclusion is “the idea that everyone should be able to enjoy the same facilities, activities and experiences, including people with disabilities or other prob-

lems”¹. A more detailed definition is in the Oxford Dictionary: “the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups”².

Both of these definitions are good, although they are functional rather than conceptual, which is perhaps why neither answers the question: “To what end?” or “Why should we provide this equal access?”; and to answer these two questions, a third (and most important) question must be answered: “What will this equal access actually do for people with disabilities?” Really “equal” opportunity, as it says? Probably not likely. On the other hand, in liberal discourse, to say “equal opportunity” is quite enough, because afterwards it depends on how the person is going to use this opportunity. And here it is worth paying attention to the term “people with intellectual disabilities”, and add also “people with mental disabilities”. In general, everyone else, including people with physical problems or minorities, are quite capable of evaluating and utilizing opportunities in one way or another. They are also able to find some meaning and purpose for their use. But what about people with intellectual and mental health problems? How can we get to the core of their inner world and include them in society? And include them as who or what? And most importantly, for what purpose? What is it for us and these people (if we decide to divide our society into “us” and “them” for analytical purposes)?

Of course, the answers to these questions apply to all excluded groups and individuals, but by placing these questions in the context of so-called ‘mental abnormality,’ it is possible to expose an irreparable flaw in such definitions, which tend to be used for policy-making and pedagogical interventions; these definitions miss the point. To speak to this essential point, philosophers who attempt to provide a substantive definition of inclusion ask how does this concept apply to people with intellectual disabilities (Shemanov, 2014). Many authors have already criticized the constructivist approach to the social model of disability on which inclusive policies and practices are based. In addition, in disability studies there are authors who consider people not just as “equals” and in this sense “the same,” but also as “others” who have the right to individual and collective expression of their otherness within the framework of the cultural, rather than social, model of disability (Devlieger et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, turning to the Soviet philosophical tradition allows us to consider the concept of inclusion

from a different perspective and to outline ways of understanding it anew for interaction with people whose form of disability seems to be the most problematic — with people who have intellectual or mental disabilities — thus clarifying the very concept of inclusion.

The prevailing contemporary ethics in disability studies is primarily concerned with the opposition between the “social” and “medical” models of disability. The social model, unlike the medical model, focuses not on the individual and his or her bodily (read disease!) problems but on the characteristics of the social environment, which perceives a person with a disability as “not-normal.” It is precisely because of the characteristics of the environment — from infrastructure to attitudes towards people with disabilities as a form of illness or some kind of “exotic” — that such people are hardly seen on our streets and in public places, let alone their active participation in political or public life, or even just being in the workplace. It should be recognized that the social model works quite well for physical and sensory problems, which can be overcome by creating a “barrier-free infrastructure” and changing attitudes towards people with these types of disabilities. When it comes to certain psychological disabilities — individuals with ASD or schizophrenia who have high intellectual functioning are now also accepted in some communities and workplaces. Nevertheless, significant intellectual disabilities and actual antisocial mental disorders are rarely at the center of policy discussions. They are either avoided or placed on a general list of “people for inclusion,” among many others, without much detail (as is done in the dictionary definition above). The situation seems to be that when we talk about mental disorders, the old debates of so-called “biogenetic” and “sociogenetic” approaches loom behind all documents — from laws to inclusive schools’ charters.

This opposition between “biological” and “social” in human being was extremely important and at some moment very typical for Soviet psychology. Today, this opposition is constantly masked by various kinds of “bio-socio-cultural” conceptualizations designed to reconcile this contradiction. That is why it is now so important to turn to the legacy of such a radical Soviet thinker as Ewald Ilyenkov, who never gave anything “biological” a single chance in the interpretation of human behavior and never tired of repeating in these words or the others that “...everything human in man... is 100% — not 90 or even 99 — the result of the social development of human society...”. (Ilyenkov, “Biological and Social in a man”³, see as well Ilyenkov, 1968). However, nowadays, one can easily come across the following articles

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/inclusion> — last visit on 1.08. 2024.

² <https://global.oup.com/academic/category/dictionaries-and-reference/?lang=en&cc=gb> — last visit on 1.08.2024.

³ <http://caute.ru/ilyenkov/texts/sch/biosoc.html>

even in linguistics journals (and who would doubt that speech is a purely human characteristic?): “Language in the bio-socio-cultural concept: lexical and grammatical ‘levels’” (Druzhinin, Karamalak, 2017). Such texts are based on the works of famous neuropsychologists such as U. Maturana and F. Varela, and cognition in them is defined through the special structure of “neural networks distributed throughout the human body and ensuring the operation of higher nervous activity in an infinite variety of structural interactions” “man-environment” through certain cognitive/learning mechanisms, i.e. literal ‘memorization’ of the organism’s sensorimotor reactions to repeated (recurrent) and complicating (recursive) external stimuli, resulting in the construction of this or that behavioral distinction – knowledge.” (Druzhinin, Karmalak 2017, p. 5; Maturana, Varela, 2001). About such interpretations of the human psyche (which, in fact, do not differ in any way from the description of the animal psyche) Ilyenkov sarcastically wrote 40 years ago that they lead “to a ‘socio-bio-chemical-electrophysical-microphysical-quantum-mechanical’ understanding of the essence of man.” (Ilyenkov, 1984b)

And yet, for all his “sociologizing position,” to what extent did Ilyenkov deny the factor of corporeality in the life of the individual? As a consistent Marxist and materialist, Ilyenkov could in no way follow such a denial. And for him the concept of “body” in the definition of a human being played a huge role. An important part of Ilyenkov’s ideas was based on the views of Benedict Spinoza. In his reflections Ilyenkov relied on Spinoza’s ideas that thinking is inseparable from the “thinking body”. In his turn, Spinoza followed Ren Descartes in the notion that it is possible to separate one body from another only if it is in motion. But for Spinoza, no body can move independently of other bodies; all bodies affect each other in motion. However, if these bodies are “thinking bodies,” they can choose how to move depending on the influence of other bodies. Spinoza went quite far in evaluating the role of motion in relation to thinking. He insisted, for example, that the purely “abstract” idea of the geometric figure of a circle does not come to us from the realm of “pre-existing ideas” but arises after the constant repetition of the movement of our hands drawing circles or following some rounded shape. (Ilyenkov 1984a, pp. 26–47). Ilyenkov’s refusal to separate the bodily from the psychological was based on this very point: “...the thinking and the body are not two different things existing separately and therefore able to interact, but *one and the same thing*, only expressed in two different ways. ... The thinking body cannot cause changes in the thinking, cannot influence the thinking, for its existence as a “thinking body” is thinking. If a thinking body does not move/act, it is no longer a thinking body, but just a body. If it acts, it is in no way influence on thinking, for its very action constitutes thinking. ...

Thinking is *not the product of action, but action itself*...” (Ilyenkov 1984a, pp. 30–31 – italics E.I.).

This idea was literally realized in the method of work with deaf-blind children in Zagorsk, where the whole process of cognition was based on the repetition of movements, and was brilliantly described by Ilyenkov in his unfinished essay “The Poem about the Spoon”. The spoon as the hero of this text was a symbol of the so-called “non-organic” human body, an example of our environment, which is completely transformed by our needs and goals. Here Ilyenkov follows Marx, who develops this idea of Spinoza and says that man, moving in the natural environment, transforms it to suit himself, turning the whole environment into an “extension” of his biological (organic) body (Ilyenkov, 1984a, Ilyenkov, 1984b). In this respect, the “barrier-free environment” that is promoted in the framework of the social model of disability can also be regarded as a part of the “non-organic human body”, an environment customized to certain bodily features.

This idea of Ilyenkov, based on the works of Spinoza and Marx, certainly applies not only to the physical interaction of bodies, but also to psychological and social interaction, since the body that is thinking is in the interaction. According to Spinoza, any collision of bodies is reflected on them in the form of “affect”, and “affect” is defined very simply – what increases the body’s capacity for action (in the broadest sense) can be regarded as positive affect, what reduces the body’s potential is negative affect. However, when considering the moment when the interaction of bodies takes on special significance, it is necessary to turn to the works of another scholar who is at the very center of the line that begins with the ideas of Spinoza and Marx and ends with Ilyenkov’s interpretation of the “thinking body” and the “inorganic human body.” This figure is Lev Vygotsky.

If we retell Vygotsky’s ideas in terms of Spinoza-Ilyenkov, we will get a story about the meeting of some thinking body with other thinking bodies (an adult and a child, a child with other children, etc.), due to which the ability of this body to move-think will increase. Although, in an unfavorable scenario of this encounter, such ability may not change or may even become less. And here the “story of the meeting” makes a turn and comes back to the question of the correlation of biological and social in a human being, in this case in a developing child, and even more precisely in such a child who has certain intellectual disorders, which can make the meeting of thinking bodies problematic. Whence can the problem arise? From the bodily deficiencies of one of the thinking bodies, namely from the mental retardation of the child caused by the specifics of his brain? Vygotsky’s answer to such an assumption is complete disagreement. Moreover, Vygotsky’s position is directly opposed to this assumption (although, at first glance, this assumption seems quite rational and consistent

with common sense). The essence of human development according to Vygotsky is about the development of higher, not elementary mental functions. In this sense, the logic of trying to develop the most primitive skills in a mentally retarded child and avoiding work with thinking is deeply flawed. So, the encounter of any thinking bodies must take place at the level of higher psychological functions.

Vygotsky in his work "On the Question of Compensatory Processes in the Development of the Mentally Retarded Child" wrote about it as follows: "If we speak about the group of mentally retarded children, whose retardation is based on pathological insufficiency or brain damage, then there the core of debility itself and all phenomena related to insufficiency are the most difficult to be pedagogically influenced. They yield only to indirect, training, stimulating constant influence. But since you are powerless to eliminate the root cause, you cannot eliminate the phenomena that belong to the core. It is quite different when we speak of secondary, tertiary, fourth and fifth order complications. They arise on the basis of the primary complication, are removed in the first place and, as one of the modern authors puts it, the removal of a secondary complication in a mentally retarded person changes the whole clinical picture of debility to such an extent that modern clinic would refuse to recognize debility if the process of educational work were brought to an end" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 130).

In this logic, the developmental disorders of a mentally retarded child are not related to the organic defect itself, but to the fact that secondary disorders arise on its basis, but the cause of these new disorders is not the primary biological deficit, but the wrong work in the process of interaction with such a child. If we return again to the terminology of Spinoza and Ilyenkov – the meeting of "thinking bodies" was incomplete, insufficient, because it did not lead to an increase in the capabilities of this child. For a full-fledged meeting, the child needs an adequate environment and interaction built in a specific way. "Underdevelopment of higher functions is connected with the cultural underdevelopment of the mentally retarded child, with his falling out of the cultural environment, from the "nourishment" of the environment. Because of this insufficiency he did not experience the influence of the environment in time, as a result of which his retardation accumulates, negative properties accumulate, added complications in the form of social underdevelopment, pedagogical neglect. In the environment in which he grows up, he took less than he could; no one tried to connect him with the environment; and if the child was little and poorly connected with the children's collective, secondary complications may arise" (Ibid., p. 129–130). The accumulation of "negative properties" suggests that the "affect" of this encounter of thinking bodies was negative.

The way in which Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of the "children's collective" is noteworthy here. In another text called "The Collective as a Factor in the Development of the Defective Child" he insists on this and says that the children's collective should be diverse (Vygotsky 1983, pp. 196–218). In the part of the article that deals with mentally retarded children, he writes about how important it is that children in the collective have different degrees of mental retardation or levels of development, because this is what helps the retarded child to develop. Interestingly, in the notes to this text, the compilers write a phrase that rather contradicts Vygotsky's own words. Note comments on the word "collective", which appears for the first time in the text in the second paragraph without additional definitions: "When Vygotsky spoke of a collective in relation to defective children, he meant to unite them in a common group according to some single characteristic (age, belonging to the same category of anomaly, degree of development or underdevelopment) (Ibid., p. 354). However, in the article itself, Vygotsky writes the following: "We think that it would be more correct to say not that in free children's collectives new sides of the personality of a profoundly retarded child are revealed (which is true in itself), but, rather, that in these collectives the personality of a profoundly retarded child really finds a living source of development and in the process of collective activity and cooperation rises to a higher stage. Now we can see how profoundly anti-pedagogical is the rule according to which we select homogeneous collectives of retarded children for convenience. By doing this, we not only go against the natural tendency in the development of children, but, what is much more important, we, depriving a mentally retarded child of collective cooperation and communication with other children above him, aggravate rather than alleviate the immediate cause of the underdevelopment of his higher mental functions." (Ibid., p. 209).

This fragment seems to be extremely important for understanding the principles of inclusion from the perspective of cultural-historical approach. As a rule, the well-known (and in many foreign universities – the only known) concept of "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is by default associated with the interaction between a child and an adult. However, it is much more common for children to understand other children better than adults. No matter how precise and accurate a teacher or educator's task he or she places in the ZPD, children's play and children's interactions with each other are no less, and perhaps even more important for a child's development. Vygotsky was always thinking about a certain zone that sets the perspective for the development of higher mental functions in any child, and he made no exception for children with intellectual disabilities. Another thing is that the requirements to such a "free children's collective" and to the teacher who

works with it can be very high. In the conclusion of the section on mentally retarded children in the article in question, he writes: “We see the paramount importance of the pedagogy of the collective in the whole structure of the education of the retarded child. We see what value is acquired by common collectives of retarded and normal children, what importance is acquired by the selection of groups and proportions of intellectual levels in them. Here we find a basic pedagogical law which is hardly a general law for the whole education of the abnormal child”. (Ibid., p. 210).

Thus, the idea of inclusive education in its very essence is very much in line with the ideas of cultural-historical pedagogy: it makes sense to give children themselves the opportunity for an interaction that will be a meeting of “thinking bodies” with positive affect.

And yet, closing the circle, we should return to the question that was posed at the beginning of this article — what is the purpose of such a meeting? What is the meaning and ultimate goal of inclusion? Of course, the answer to this question is related to the idea of who in general a person is, and in particular, in what capacity a person acts in the philosophy of education, without which it is impossible to talk about social inclusion.

We would like to refer to one of the serious new works that discuss the philosophical and methodological foundations of inclusion, namely the handbook *Philosophical and Methodological Foundations of Inclusive Education* (Alekhina, Shemanov, 2022). The second and third chapters, which provide a theoretical analysis of the various concepts that define our understanding of inclusion, cannot but be admired for how comprehensively and capaciously they present all the concepts important for this topic. Unfortunately, the cultural-historical approach is presented in these chapters in a very short and general block of one page (Alekhina Shemanov, 2022, pp. 123–124), which emphasizes that “the unfolding of this topic in many ways still awaits its researcher”, which is hard to disagree with.

At the beginning of the second chapter of this handbook, a glossary can be found, in which concepts such as “authenticity and autonomy of the individual” are given: “The concept of autonomy is based on the notion of a rational, self-aware, responsible for its volitional decisions Ego, which strives above all for self-actualization and securing for itself this right to autonomy. Authenticity means following oneself, one’s own nature, commitment to the authentic image of one’s own being”. (Alekhina, Shemanov, 2022, p. 59). Both are based on a conceptualization of “self-determination”: “Ch. Taylor distinguishes two aspects of authenticity. The first includes the moments of creativity and construction, associated with independence and even opposition to social rules, which can reach the point of conflict with moral norms. The second, however, requires, according to Taylor, an openness to the horizon of significance, i.e.

a system of life values that claim to be universal (ideas about good and evil, about man and his freedom, about God, etc.). ... Taylor emphasizes the inappropriateness of preferring the first aspect of authenticity (autonomy without reference to a universal horizon of significance) to the detriment of the second (reference to a horizon of significance that presupposes the freedom of the other and rejects violence), since this preference leads to extreme subjectivism and immoralism”. (Ibid.).

Just below, the same glossary discusses the concept of embodied personhood, emphasizing that “social constructionist scholars limit themselves to how the body is represented in the social constructions of the individual or the discourse of society, in its representations and practices, or in culture. The body is reduced to a social construction, to a discourse, or to its representation in a person’s experiences (in the phenomenological approach). In this case, the human personality is considered not as a whole encompassing body and spirit, holistically expressing itself in material culture and its meaning, but only primarily as a source of discourse, in which corporeality is represented in the order of signs, which represent not the bodily reality itself, but social relations (relations of power, dominance, status, etc.).” (Ibid., pp. 59–60). Thus, this manual pays significant attention to the problem of corporeality in different interpretations of disability and its role in the organization of inclusive education. (Ibid.).

In this connection, we would like to return to the notions of the “thinking body” and the “non-organic human body” that Ilyenkov developed. While this manual discusses the concepts of “autonomy,” “authenticity,” and “embodiment,” it paradoxically lacks the concept of the “subject,” which was central to Soviet educational psychology, which was created in the cultural-historical Vygotskian tradition. We can assume that the reason for this is a too rational and will-oriented view of this “subject”. And if we try to discuss the child as a subject of pedagogical influence as a “thinking body”, there is a risk that the emphasis will again be on the word ‘thinking’ rather than on the word “body”. A rationalized arrangement of accents will exclude the idea of “affect” in all discussions of the self-determining subject as the goal of pedagogical influence and the process of human development in general. However, it is worth recalling that the “principle of the unity of affect and intellect” was one of Vygotsky’s leading principles, and Spinoza was the hero of one of his last (unfinished) works.

If the goal of education, including inclusive education, is to conceive of the “thinking body” acting in the space of other bodies as a subject, then the “subject” may turn out to be the notion that brings together autonomy, authenticity and embodiment. From the point of view of the cultural-historical approach, the “thinking body” moves among bodies that are “non-organic human bodies,” that is, in the environment of humanly

adjusted objects (subjects -in the sense of A.N. Leontiev, continuing Vygotsky's ideas). On the other hand, the “thinking body” moves among other “thinking bodies”, that is, in the social environment. It is this movement, which in no way can be divided into two different types of movement, that forms the thinking body both as a “just body”, with its affects and physical reactions, and as a “thinking body”, with its understanding of the world and its attitude to it⁴.

It seems not coincidental that Soviet psychology and philosophy have recently become increasingly popular worldwide. Even if foreign scientists and educators mainly pay attention to its instrumental aspects, Halperin's instrumentalization is different from the tools used, for example, in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) by behavioral educators and therapists. The same can be said of the Soviet tradition of neuropsychology, originating with A. Luria, a student of Vygotsky, when comparing it with the research abroad that is so fashionable today. Certainly, there are “tools” and “tools”. And understanding the purpose of using these tools is crucial, and it depends precisely on the educational philosophy and on the vision of a human as a “human being”.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Alexander Suvorov, professor of psychology, Ilyenkov's most famous and devoted student and friend from the Zagorsk boarding school for deaf-blind children. Describing the dia-

lectic of the relationship between the “authentic” and the “brought in” in mental development, he wrote: “and provocation with guidance, and one's own attempts; and development, and self-development... — but not that which is laid down in the “genes of daddy and mommy,” but that which is laid down in jointly shared activity...” (Suvorov, 1998, pp. 183–184).

Thus, interpreting inclusion from a cultural-historical approach can stimulate new research that could help answer many relevant questions. What is the ultimate goal of inclusion? Where can we find the ‘authentic’ person in inclusive policies and pedagogies? What happens to the “thinking body” that thinks differently than we are used to when we engage with it? Where will the thinking of a child with mental retardation go if the social environment (even if unconsciously) expects this development to stop sooner or later and remain “insufficient” due to “natural” limitations? How will a person who grows up in an environment where their movement in the social field will be constantly restricted by the negative or ignoring reactions of others behave? Are we really in control of our reactions or are we sending an invisible message to the children about their diagnosis and our expectations? All these questions await answers that cannot be found unless we pay close attention to the philosophical foundations of the pedagogy we create and practice.

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⁴ A discussion of Spinoza's notion of conatus could have been appropriate here, but the scope and aims of this article do not allow it. A more detailed interpretation of conatus and collectivity can be found in my other text (Bagdasarova, 2023)

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Information about the author

Nina A. Bagdasarova, Ph.D. in Psychology, Professor at the Department of Psychology, American University of Central Asia (AUCA), Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4372-5454>, e-mail: bagdasarova_n@auca.kg

Информация об авторе

Нина Ароновна Багдасарова, кандидат психологических наук, профессор кафедры психологии Американского университета в Центральной Азии (АУЦА), Бишкек, Кыргызская Республика, ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4372-5454>, e-mail: bagdasarova_n@auca.kg

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Ethical approval was not required for this study as it was theoretical in nature and did not involve human participants.

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