Культурно-историческая психология
2026. *22*(1), 18—29.
https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2026220103
ISSN: 1816-5435 (печатный)
ISSN: 2224-8935 (online)

Cultural-Historical Psychology
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ISSN: 1816-5435 (print)
ISSN: 2224-8935 (online)

Научная статья | Original paper

L.S. Vygotsky: reading anew. Part 2

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Abstract

This article is a continuation of the author's previously published work "L.S. Vygotsky: Reading Anew. Part One," which analyzed the early period of L.S. Vygotsky's scholarly work preceding the formulation of his cultural-historical approach. The author examines in detail the pivotal moment of Vygotsky's report at the 2nd Psychoneurological Congress in 1924 and a number of related works, including the manuscript "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology."

The article attempts to demonstrate that one of the reasons for Vygotsky's transition to developing cultural-historical theory—the seeds of which were already evident in his candidate dissertation on the mechanisms of aesthetic reaction—was his understanding of the importance of a methodological analysis of the relationship between the category of "appearance" (representing so-called "psychical" phenomena, following K. Stumpf) and the category of "reality," which Vygotsky considered as the "essence" of these phenomena. The results of the analysis of the category of "ideal" conducted by E.V. Ilyenkov are introduced into the context of similar ideas formulated within the framework of the activity approach of A.N. Leontiev and the theory of stage-by-stage formation of P.Ya. Galperin.

Keywords: objective research; reflexology; psychological experiment; psychic phenomena; cultural-historical psychology; activity approach

For citation: Nechaev, N.N. (2026). L.S. Vygotsky: reading anew. Part 2. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *22*(1), 18—29. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2026220103

Л.С. Выготский: перечитывая заново. Часть 2

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Резюме

Статья является продолжением ранее опубликованной работы автора ***«Л.С. Выготский: перечитывая заново. Часть первая»***, посвященной анализу раннего периода научного творчества Л.С. Выготского, предшествовавшего тому периоду, в котором им были сформулированы направления разработки идей культурно-исторического подхода. В качестве ключевого момента подробно рассматриваются его доклад на II Психоневрологическом съезде в 1924 г. и ряд «примыкающих» к нему работ, включая и рукопись работы «Исторический смысл психологического кризиса».

В данной статье сделана попытка показать, что одной из причин перехода Л.С. Выготского к разработке культурно-исторической теории, «ростки» которой были уже фактически намечены Л.С. Выготским в его кандидатской диссертации, посвященной механизмам эстетической реакции, стало понимание Л.С. Выготским значимости методологического анализа соотношения категории «кажимости», представляющей так называемые «психические» явления (К. Штумпф), и категории «действительности», рассматриваемой Л.С. Выготским как «сущность» этих явлений.

Результаты анализа категории «идеальное», проведенного Э.В. Ильенковым, вводятся в контекст аналогичных идей, сформулированных в рамках деятельностного подхода А.Н. Леонтьева и теории поэтапного формирования П.Я. Гальперина.

Ключевые слова: объективное исследование, рефлексология, психологический эксперимент, психические явления, культурно-историческая психология, деятельностный подход

Для цитаты: Нечаев, Н.Н. (2026). Л.С. Выготский: перечитывая заново. Часть 2. *Культурно-историческая психология, 22*(1), 18—29. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2026220103

4.

Let us remind the reader of the experiment with which the first part of this article concluded (Nechaev, 2024, pp. 23—24). Subjects were shown on a screen an image consisting of black-and-white patches of varying shapes and sizes, arranged in a seemingly chaotic pattern. Before the experiment began, the experimenter instructed them that the image depicted a cow's head — yet none of the subjects participating for the first time could discern such a "head". The experimenter then proceeded to display a series of realistic images of different cows' heads, alternating each realistic image with the original ambiguous one. As results from the experiment — conducted on numerous occasions in various audience settings — consistently show, there gradually appeared among the viewers those who began to "see" the cow's head in the original image with increasing clarity, and their number grew with each successive presentation of the realistic images. It is important to emphasize that for each participant who "saw" the cow's head, the emerging percept appeared unexpectedly, as the result of a distinctive visual insight.

By the end of the experiment, virtually all participants — with the exception of a few isolated subjects — clearly "saw" the originally specified image as a fully realistic depiction of the head of this familiar domestic animal. For some participants, however, an additional procedure was required: the use of a contour tracing the outline of the "target" cow's head, so that it could emerge for them as a "figure against a background" — an experience likewise accompanied by a characteristic insight, as subjects suddenly began to "see" the image specified in the instructions. Moreover, the percept thus formed persisted for them even after the materialised contour was removed from the displayed original image.

This experiment with an initially "non-obvious" image of a cow's head, described in the preceding article, compels a reconsideration of a range of propositions that have acquired the status of axioms in the psychology of perception, but which in reality remain largely hypotheses lacking an adequate evidential basis. And they will remain so until we accept as our starting point the view that our "image of the world as a whole" (Leontiev, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 251—261) and the images of reality that arise for each of us are the psychological outcomes of our activity within that objective reality — activity that is always equipped, in one way or another, with specific means enabling the disclosure of content necessary for the realisation of our intentions and plans. As L.S. Vygotsky first formulated in the context of domestic psychology in his concept of "instrumental psychology", the efficacy of this activity is determined by its being so equipped (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 103—108).

It should be noted that this very approach of L.S. Vygotsky — from which he departed in the early 1930s, having become absorbed in the problem of the development of meaning — became the foundation for the elaboration of both the principal ideas of A.N. Leontiev's activity approach and the concept of stage-by-stage formation developed by my Teacher, P.Ya. Galperin. "Psychic activity", as P.Ya. Galperin observed, "is not a pure spirit that can accomplish anything by uttering a biblical 'let there be.' It is the same kind of activity as any other, and its efficacy depends on how well it is equipped. If you have a tool, you work well. If you have no tools, you work poorly" (Galperin, 2023, p. 446).

It appears that the experiment described above convincingly demonstrates that viewing images of "real" cows — especially when that viewing is supplemented with means equipping the subject with specific semantic schemata relevant to the content of the stimulus image — allows the subject to disclose, or, as A.N. Leontiev liked to put it, to "scoop out" (Leontiev, 1975, p. 70), significant content even in cases where the presence of an image is not an "obvious" fact. Any reader of these lines may reproduce this experiment by examining, in the prescribed order, the illustrations appearing in the journal cited above (Nechaev, 2024, pp. 23—24): one should first study the illustration on p. 23, then the one on p. 24, after which — returning to p. 23 — one will, with almost 100% probability (as the results of the author's experiment conducted with readers of the published article demonstrate), perceive an image corresponding to the task originally set.

In this context one may cite an analogous experiment conducted by A.N. Leontiev with his grandson (Leontiev, 1975, p. 70), in which he showed the child so-called "puzzle pictures" — the kind that now regularly circulate on the Internet, such as "Boring's Mother-in-Law", "Old Man or Cowboy", "Horse or Frog", or "Find the Rabbit", "Find the Tourist", etc. ("6 of the Most Unusual Illusion Paintings...", https://aif.ru/dosug/1846109). As A.N. Leontiev noted, "the subject was told: 'Before you are ordinary puzzle pictures for children: try to find the object that is covertly depicted in each of them'. (Under these

conditions, — Leontiev writes, — the process could not proceed at all according to the scheme of comparing the image of the object formed by the subject with its depiction contained in the elements of the picture. Nevertheless, the puzzle pictures were solved by the subjects. They 'scooped out' the depiction of the object from the picture, and the image of this familiar object became actualised for them). (emphasis mine — *N.N.*)" (Leontiev, 1975, p. 70).

We shall not address here the adequacy of A.N. Leontiev's interpretation of the results of his experiment with the puzzle pictures. It may, however, be noted that these results correlate with data obtained by A.R. Luria in his experiments conducted with subjects in Central Asia in 1931—1932, using incomplete images of geometric figures employed in Gestalt-psychological experiments. In these images, village inhabitants perceived not geometric figures but fully realistic depictions of everyday household objects (Luria, 1974).

As A.R. Luria — one of L.S. Vygotsky's closest collaborators — observed: "The higher forms of human conscious activity always rely on external means (an example being a knot tied in a handkerchief to help remember some content, combinations of letters written down so as not to forget a thought, a multiplication table used for performing arithmetic operations, etc.). These historically formed means prove to be essential factors in establishing functional connections between individual regions of the brain — through them, brain regions that previously operated independently become links within a single functional system. Figuratively speaking, one may say that the historically formed means for organising human behaviour tie new 'knots' in its cerebral activity" (Luria, 1974, p. 74).

In essence, A.R. Luria's neuropsychological interpretation reproduces the central idea of the instrumental approach formulated by L.S. Vygotsky during this period. As A.N. Leontiev recalled: "For many years I kept a diagram drawn by Vygotsky on a sheet of paper in the course of explaining his conception. The diagram contained circles — not always complete ones, semi-circles — in which important words were written: 'man', 'tool', 'object of labour', 'product'. For some reason I now recall very clearly the word 'fire', and next to it, beneath 'tool', the words 'method' and 'means'. This was processing with the aid of fire. A tool was not only a physical object. The tool-mediated, instrumentally mediated nature of behaviour — that was the first tenet to be laid at the foundation of the further development of Vygotsky's research programme and that of his associates and students. In other words, what emerged was a direction that for a brief period was called 'instrumental psychology', a term that preceded 'cultural-historical" (Leontiev, 1986, p. 109).

In an analogous contribution made earlier within the framework of the so-called "home discussion" of 1969 (Leontiev, 1994, pp. 247—258), A.N. Leontiev remarked: "It is known that the very idea of the mediated nature of higher mental functions arose from an analysis of, and by analogy with, the structure of mediated labour. A tool, transformed into a sign, preserves the goal-directedness of the process. ... It must be said that in the subsequent works (of L.S. Vygotsky — N.N.) this original idea was somehow somewhat effaced. The emphasis shifted to the problem of meaning, to the inner aspect of the sign, and understandably so — it became necessary to speak about the structure of consciousness" (Leontiev, 1994, p. 250).

However, L.S. Vygotsky himself, during the period of elaborating the principal ideas of cultural-historical theory — a period that began in 1929 under the influence of his study of the works of P. Janet (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 5, p. 197) — specifically emphasised in his *Notebooks* the distinction between his own viewpoint and the neuropsychological interpretation of A.R. Luria: "Our differences regarding the question of localisation: for us, the focus of localisation is on extrocerebral connections — cf. Jackson: in comprehending another — the other activates connections in my brain — I am his victim; in comprehending oneself — one region of the brain connects with another through the periphery. Mediation creates fundamentally new types of connections in the nervous system. What is impossible for one person is possible for two. Regulation through the periphery (i.e., through real activity, as L.S. Vygotsky has in mind here — *N.N.*) is a common principle in the organisation of the nervous system. ... We (hold that): in the brain and its functions, in the naturalistic sense, there are no and cannot be any structures corresponding to speech — they arise from above, from psychological structures (two brains interacting through the historico-cultural environment (emphasis mine — *N.N.*)). In the word lies the source of new brain structures, and not all possibilities of operations with the word are contained in the morphological structure of the brain. Speech and consciousness: at first we thought — speech and thinking; thereafter — through intellectualisation — speech bearing on memory, attention, perception. That is, we extended speech to the whole of consciousness. More important: to derive it from that change which it produces in consciousness. The first word is a change in consciousness long before a change in thinking: *prise de conscience* (literally, 'seizure of consciousness' — a term widely used in French psychology since the 19th century to denote the phenomenon of 'insight' — *N.N.*); cf. the problem of first questions" (Vygotsky, 2017, p. 482).

Insight — understood as the awareness of the results of the "appearance of the object to the subject" (Galperin, P.Ya.) — is the psychological result arising for the subject through the process of his active engagement with objective reality, in the course of which, within the system of neurophysiological regulation of his activity, a "transformation" of the content of this reflection occurs into the psychological "image of the action field" of the subject, determining the further TRANS-FORM-ation

of that image. As L.S. Vygotsky wrote in one of his last works, published in 1935: "... this transition of the dynamics of action into the dynamics of thought and vice versa reveals, as experiment shows, three basic phases, to which three basic problems of affective dynamics correspond: 1) the transformation of the dynamics of the psychological field, the dynamics of the situation, into the dynamics of thinking; 2) the development and unfolding of the dynamic processes of thought itself, and its reverse transformation into the dynamics of action. Action, refracted through the prism of thought, becomes a different action — meaningful, conscious, and consequently voluntary and free, i.e., standing in a fundamentally different relation to the situation than action directly conditioned by the situation and not having passed through this direct and reverse transformation of dynamics" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 5, p. 250).

In this connection, it seems expedient to compare Vygotsky's views — as developed during the initial period of his engagement with reactology — with the ideas of I.M. Sechenov, who was among the first to recognise the significance of neurophysiological mechanisms for converting the results of the subject's activity into that "sensory impression" which discloses to the subject the field of his possible action. It should be emphasised that the young L.S. Vygotsky studied Sechenov's works attentively during the Gomel period of his entry into psychology — suffice it to mention his article "Consciousness as a Problem of the Psychology of Behaviour", published in 1925 in one of the collected volumes edited by K.N. Kornilov (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 78—98). In this article, drawing on the concept of "inhibited reflexes" formulated by I.M. Sechenov, Vygotsky attempted to illuminate the "psychodynamics" of consciousness, thereby realising his own interpretation of the reactological approach — one substantially different from Kornilov's, yet one in which, as Vygotsky himself acknowledged in 1931 during the so-called "reactological discussion", he still saw at that time the possibility of an objective investigation of human psychology (Vygotsky, 2024, pp. 137—139).

Here is what I.M. Sechenov wrote in his article "Impression and Reality" as far back as 1890: "Guided by such considerations, upon reviewing physiological data from the domain of sensation, it was not difficult to convince myself that the clue could be found only in the sphere of visual acts. Without even mentioning that the connection between forms of sensation and the structure of the organ has been most fully elucidated here, it is only here that a developed, fully formed impression has a sharply expressed objective character. What takes place in the eye during seeing we do not feel — we see directly everything external as standing outside of us. This externalisation of impressions — a kind of materialisation of sensation — may be compared with the construction of an object's image by a plane mirror, with the sole difference that the physical mirror produces images behind itself, whereas the mirror of consciousness constructs them before itself" (Sechenov, 1908, vol. 2, p. 229). The content of this article by Sechenov deserves a dedicated analysis and may serve as the subject of a separate study. Here we shall merely note that I.M. Sechenov, evidently captivated by his hypothesis regarding the physiological mechanisms underlying the emergence of the "sensory impression", became a prisoner of the layman's perspective — the perspective of someone looking into a mirror and forgetting the laws of optics established by Descartes, according to which "the angle of incidence of light rays equals the angle of their reflection".

In reality, the "emergence" of an image in the form of a peculiar "Mirror World" is not a property of the mirror itself but rather the result of a psychological "doubling" of our "sensory impressions", in which the subject exploits the capacity of a mirror surface to reflect incident light rays in order to recreate a "virtual space" that expands his psychological capacities through the reflection of those light rays within the system of functional organs of the central nervous system — thanks to which, in the course of our activity, we obtain a lawful "expansion" and even "doubling" of the content of our "sensory impression", our image of objective reality.

Regrettably, it is precisely this activity-based nature of our perception — which determines the psychological laws governing the APPEAR-ance of the image of reality — that I.M. Sechenov failed to account for, viewing the image of reality arising for the human subject merely as the process and outcome of the functioning of neurophysiological structures of the central nervous system. The following assertion by I.M. Sechenov — a natural consequence of his position — is therefore entirely understandable: "Thanks to this, the visible image — that is, the sensory sign derived from an external object, and at the same time the terminal member of the causal visual series — becomes accessible to observation to the same degree as any material object is considered accessible" (Sechenov, 1908, vol. 2, p. 229). Regrettably, both I.M. Sechenov and hundreds, if not thousands, of investigators of our "subjective" world have yet to recognise that we "see" not an image but objective reality — yet we see it through the filters of our representations of reality, representations formed in and through activity.

We observe not a "sensory sign" but objective reality — which, however, presents itself to us only through that content of the "field of action" which arises in the process of our activity with various fragments of objective reality. Their properties — as characteristics of objective reality, that is, as possible OBJECTS of the subject's activity within objective reality — are available to the subject himself only as "objects" of his activity, those modes of action with objects which — thanks to his activity — are "represented" to him in the content of the image of his field of action, and through that image (Leontiev, 1983, pp. 251—261). In fairness, it should be

noted that on the same page I.M. Sechenov himself appends a remark of considerable theoretical importance: "In the practice of life", he writes, "the visible image of an object is taken for the object itself, but this is, of course, incorrect" (Sechenov, 1908, vol. 2, p. 229).

Of course, some investigators are now beginning to recognise that each of us sees not an image but objective reality, represented to us, however, through our image of that reality. Such an image arises as the process and outcome of our activity within objective reality — that is, through that content of action which each of us discloses, in the course of which the TRANS-FORM-ation of the object, means, results, and conditions of its activity within objective reality takes place. And this is available to us (we emphasise: to each of us individually) only "through" and "within" the "image" of the field of action.

Among domestic authors, P.Ya. Galperin was one of the first to clearly distinguish between the content of the image — by virtue of which the "field of action" is psychologically opened to the subject — and objective reality, which is merely represented to the subject within that "field" but, by definition, does not coincide with it, just as any painting does not coincide with its original. The key condition that enabled Galperin to shift from the traditional view of the content of the image was the concept of the "ideal", which was being actively developed in domestic philosophy and psychology by the outstanding philosopher and psychologist E.V. Ilyenkov (Ilyenkov, 2009a, pp. 6—62; Ilyenkov, 2009b, pp. 92—105), who was a close friend of both A.N. Leontiev and P.Ya. Galperin. At the same time, P.Ya. Galperin held that E.V. Ilyenkov "narrowed" the content of the concept of the "ideal" by treating this most important category exclusively in relation to an analysis of the specificity of the labour activity of the social individual.

Here is what P.Ya. Galperin wrote in his celebrated "Introduction to Psychology": "What specific content is meant when one speaks of the ideal? First and foremost, it is an image — an image of some object, process, or phenomenon. But precisely an image of the object, not the object itself, and in this sense a different, ideal object. This other object is 'ideal' in two respects. First, its features — however many there may be and in whatever complex combination they stand — are represented in the image in isolation, separately from the other properties of the original, or of its material reflection, without which no 'thing' can in reality exist. Second, this isolation of the features of the image from the other features of actually existing things — of its original or its depiction — presents itself as a purification of the image from everything inessential. The image is revealed as an object represented only in its essential features; this, incidentally, is the source of the connection between the concepts 'ideal' and 'perfect'" (Galperin, 2023, p. 174).

However, as K. Marx justly observed in the First Thesis on Feuerbach (Marx, Engels, 1955—1987, vol. 3, p. 1), the chief defect of all previous materialism is its retention of "contemplation", that is, its reliance on the empirical registration of the characteristics of one's own "sensory impression". This lawfully leads to a failure to understand what I.M. Sechenov had already grasped: any object constituting the content of our representations is merely our "sensory impression", in which that content is represented which corresponds, on the one hand, to certain needs that are actual for the given subject, but which, on the other hand, stands as the ideal "representation" of those characteristics of that fragment which can and should potentially satisfy these actual needs.

In the celebrated "Introduction" to the *Critique of Political Economy* (Marx, Engels, 1955—1987, vol. 46, pt. 1), K. Marx characterises in expanded form the determining role of the need-based foundation of the subject's activity in constituting its content as "object-related" activity: "... Consumption creates the impulse to produce; it also creates the object which is active in production as its determining aim. If it is clear that production offers consumption its external object, it is therefore equally clear that consumption ideally posits the object of production, as an internal image, as a need, as drive and as purpose. It creates the objects of production in a still subjective form" (Marx, Engels, 1955—1987, vol. 46, pt. 1, p. 32).

The development of this Marxian idea, significant for psychology, was accomplished by E.V. Ilyenkov in the following form: "IMAGE is not a 'phantom,' not a 'subjective state' introspectively registered by the brain within itself. Image is the form of the thing imprinted in the body of the subject, in the form of that 'bend' which the OBJECT introduced into the trajectory of the subject's bodily movement — it is the presentedness of the form of the object in the form of the trajectory of the movement of the subject, subjectively experienced by him as a 'forced' — 'unfree' — change in the scheme of reflexively executed movement. In Pribram's account, this becomes a 'phantom' precisely because IMAGE is immediately registered as a 'state of the brain', whereas it is merely a mode of encoding the 'image' in the 'language of the brain', and by no means the image itself (emphasis mine — *N.N.*). IMAGE — in the real body of the real subject — that is where it is 'localised': first as an event 'at the boundary' of the receptor and the object — but the mediating object actually constitutes a part of the subject's body, not a part of the object's body — the stick in the hands of the blind man, the probe in the hand of the surgeon — since it realises the scheme of the subject's action and is in action actually located 'on this side of the subject, 'not' on the other'" (Ilyenkov, 2009b, pp. 101—102).

Earlier in his work "Dialectics of the Ideal", written in the mid-1970s — a programmatic work for an understanding of Ilyenkov's views on the nature and essence of the category of the "ideal", which, thanks to A.D. Maidansky (Maidansky, 2009, pp. 175—183), was first published in 2009, without abridgements or "external" edi-

torial interventions that distort Ilyenkov's thought, in the journal *Logos* (Ilyenkov, 2009a, pp. 6—62) — E.V. Ilyenkov wrote: "By 'ideality', or 'the ideal', materialism is obliged to understand that very specific and strictly demarcated RELATION between two (at minimum) material objects (things, processes, events, states), within which one material object, remaining itself, plays the role of a representative of another object (all emphases are mine — *N.N.*) — or, more precisely, of the universal nature of that other object, the universal form and law of that other object, which remains invariant across all its changes, across all its empirically observable variations" (Ilyenkov, 2009a, p. 13).

From this standpoint it must become evident that it is precisely the transformation of neurophysiological regulatory structures in the form of the emergence of so-called "conditional connections" (I.P. Pavlov) — a transformation that lawfully occurs in the process of the subject's activity with one or another fragment of objective reality — that becomes the material foundation of the existence of the "ideal": the "representative" of the objective nature of that fragment of objective reality which was or has become significant for the subject's activity, and which — by virtue of this "representation" — begins to "be present" for the subject even in the absence of that fragment.

In his day, F.V. Bassin, appraising the significance of N.A. Bernstein's ideas for the development of neurophysiology, wrote: "When we say, therefore, that a reaction is determined by a 'model of the future,' this expression means least of all that the driving factors of the unfolding physiological reaction are localised in the future. It means only that the formation of the reaction (in reality — the formation of the subject's action — N.N.) occurs on the basis of experience which, having been accumulated earlier, allows (the subject — *N.N.*) to intervene actively in this formation with regard to probabilistic (possible — *N.N.*) relations. Most characteristic of the 'model of the future' is that in it there is peculiarly 'given that which is not' — that is, represented — as a goal, an image, a symbol or a code — something that has not yet been realised in objective reality (emphasis mine — *N.N.*)" (Bassin, 1967, p. 73).

It seems to me that it is precisely this "mechanism" of the emergence of the "ideal" that A.N. Leontiev wrote about as early as 1947 in his celebrated "Outline of the Development of the Psyche", partially published in *Problems of Mental Development* (Leontiev, 1965, pp. 209—337). I shall allow myself to quote several passages from this text of Leontiev — passages that have nonetheless remained virtually unclaimed by investigators in the elaboration of the problem of the "ideal". Here is what A.N. Leontiev wrote: "At a certain stage of development in the life of a material subject, there necessarily arise also such specific phenomena as reflect the properties of objective reality in their connections and relations — that is, they reflect reality in its objecthood (emphasis mine — *N.N.*). This is the psychic form of reflection. Taken within the system of connections and relations of the subject's own matter, psychic reflection is merely a particular state of that matter, a function of the brain. Taken within the system of connections and relations of the subject with the surrounding world, psychic reflection is an image of that world. Thus there exists a real process in which the reflected engenders the reflection, the ideal (in Marx's literal expression, it is 'translated' into the ideal). ... This process is none other than the material process of the subject's life, expressed in the processes of his activity, which link him to the objective world. ... It enables us to overcome the conception of the psyche as a special essence possessing its own special existence (emphasis mine — *N.N.*) — by virtue of which it supposedly can enter into the composition of material processes, interact with them, contain something within itself, etc. It is necessary to emphasise and specify this, because the very manner of expressing psychological concepts and relations, which has become habitual to our ear, bears the imprint of this understanding. Thus, for example, we ordinarily say that something 'takes place in our consciousness' and so on — but this is, of course, only an inevitable tribute to linguistic tradition" (Leontiev, 1965, pp. 335—337).

It is precisely this approach to the understanding of the "psyche" — as one among the possible approaches, yet one which, regrettably, L.S. Vygotsky left on the periphery of his methodological reflections on the subject of psychology without further development — that Vygotsky himself tested while at the "Zakharyino" sanatorium during the first half of 1926. "Herein lies the 'weightlessness' of the psyche, the law of the conservation of energy, and even psychophysical parallelism, "Vygotsky notes",— the psyche does not expend energy because it is not physical processes but a general qualification of nervous processes; it is not a thing and not a process, but a relation of processes; to seek in it an expenditure of energy is the same as seeking the oscillation frequency of a melody apart from its sounds, or the pressure of an architectural plan on the foundation of a building — the materials exert the pressure, while the law of their pressure is determined by the plan" (Vygotsky, 2017, p. 113). As E.Yu. Zavershneva observes in commenting on this passage from Vygotsky's *Notebooks:* "...what confronts us is a task that represents nothing less than a philosophical revolution — and moreover, a revolution not merely in terminology but in language itself. It is clear that any new thought, forcing its way through the 'lattices of language' (P. Celan), does not immediately acquire a new expression as well, and must pass through a long stage of critique and self-critique" (Zavershneva, 2009, p. 139).

It is precisely for this reason that the image — as our "sensory impression", as the result of the subject's interaction with one or another fragment of objective reality — must be considered exclusively within the context of our practical activity that TRANS-FORM-s that

fragment. By virtue of this activity, the fragment may present itself either as the goal of the activity, or as its result, or as a condition for the attainment of that goal, or, finally, as a means of obtaining the corresponding result — that is, the product of activity directed toward the satisfaction of the corresponding need. Abstracted from these foundational categories of psychology — motivation, goal, conditions, and the mode of the subject's activity, or its results — the content of the image becomes a "picture" for contemplation, rather than the most important psychological condition for the necessary TRANSFORM-ation of that "picture" by the subject in order to achieve the necessary practical result. This, in turn, lawfully becomes the primary psychological obstacle both to the development of activity and to an adequate scientific understanding of objective reality.

The ancient parable of the blind sages and the elephant is well known to many. Wishing to know what an elephant is, they attempted to do so by means of touch. One grasped the elephant's leg, another — its tusk, a third — its ear, and so on. It follows as a matter of course that the action of each participant, remaining within the limits of this empirical "investigation", produced its own result: that "objective thought-form" (Marx, Engels, 1955—1987, vol. 23, p. 86) which, having arisen in their consciousness in the form of an "object", was, on the one hand, certainly determined by the objective characteristics of the object of their investigation — that is, by the objective properties belonging to that fragment of objective reality which had become the object of investigation — and, on the other hand, by the character and content of the action of these "investigators" upon that object, which in the parable was the elephant with which each of the "sages" had to deal. As a result, the "essence" of the elephant was revealed to each of them in the form of a familiar "object" corresponding to the outcomes of previously performed acts of haptic exploration of various fragments of objective reality — fragments which, for each of the sages, had already become those "objects", in the image of which objective reality had once appeared to each of them, and which had already become the psychological acquisition of their life experience: to the first, who had grasped the leg of the elephant, this fragment appeared as a "column"; to the second, who had seized the tusk, the elephant presented itself as a "spear"; to the third, who had felt the trunk, as a "snake"; and so forth.

The problem that arose in the "investigative" activity of the sages consisted in the fact that, in the situation under consideration, the "objectification" of various "fragments" of the elephant for each of them occurred through the already "familiar" image of those particular characteristics of the objective world which each had at some point, drawing on the results of his own previous experience, managed to disclose by means of touch. Consequently, for each of them, objective reality — which presents itself to the "sighted", who already possessed the relevant experience, in the form of "an elephant" — presented itself to the "blind" scholars likewise in that "familiar" particular element of what was already "known", that is, of their "haptic" world — not of the objective world with which they were, in fact, dealing, and a fragment of which the "sighted" scholars, potentially possessing the psychological capacity to compose a richer picture of the surrounding reality, are engaged with. Yet even "sighted" investigators, as the blind sages of the parable, often find themselves in analogous situations, if they confine themselves to the empirical experience of analysing the content of their "sensory impressions" and accept as essence only the results of the empirical description of their own "sensory impression" — one that arose in their activity in the process and as the result of real yet merely sensory-mediated contacts with the objects of their investigation, contacts which, by definition, cannot disclose the essence of the investigated phenomenon.

In the parable of the blind sages and the elephant it is easy to discern the kind of "fetishism" about which K. Marx wrote in his day (Marx, Engels, 1955—1987, vol. 23, pp. 80—93), where an "object" (that is, a representation of certain features, properties, or characteristics of the object of investigation, through the mode of their disclosure and/or use) is identified with the fragment of objective reality itself and is treated as some objectively existing "thing" — so that an illegitimate "reification", a "substantivation" of the process, takes place.

Thus, for the everyday, fundamentally "empirical" consciousness of subjects — as practically described in this ancient parable — even under conditions of "collective" investigation, such a procedure "concluded" in the form of a "substantivation" and "objectification" by each participant of the partial results of that investigation, i.e., in the form of individual, unconnected "things" that merely stand side by side: in the form of those familiar "objects" through which objective reality had previously "appeared" to each of them in their empirical consciousness and which they already knew how to "represent". Hence the fruitless in its very nature controversy about what constitutes an "elephant" that unfolded among the sages.

I submit that the moral of this parable — whose history spans several millennia — is relevant not only to the situation of the open psychological crisis that prevailed in Vygotsky's time, but also to the state of psychology as it exists today. It is therefore entirely apposite, in this connection, to conclude this part of the article with the words of L.S. Vygotsky, who observed in "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology": "One need only reread a small proportion of those definitions that are currently applied to psychology — Vygotsky wrote — to see that there is no logical unity at the basis of these distinctions. Sometimes the epithet denotes a school of behaviourism, sometimes Gestalt psychology, sometimes a method of experimental psychology, psycho-

analysis; sometimes a principle of construction (eidetic, analytic, descriptive, empirical); sometimes the subject matter of the science (functional, structural, actional, intentional); sometimes a domain of investigation (*Individual psychologia*); sometimes a worldview (personalism, Marxism, spiritualism, materialism); sometimes many things at once (subjective — objective, constructive — reconstructive, physiological, biological, associative, dialectical — and more, and more). Mention is made also of historical and *verstehende*, explanatory and intuitive, scientific (Blonsky) and 'scientific' (in the sense of natural-scientific, for idealists)" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 431).

5.

In his *Notebooks* (Vygotsky, 2017), L.S. Vygotsky repeatedly returned to an assessment of the state of contemporary psychology that W. James had formulated a quarter-century before him, back in the nineteenth century. "Psychology", James wrote, "is a mass of phenomenal description, gossip, and myth, to which is added a very small amount of the genuine article — a few isolated laws, with no real connections discovered, and no clear view of the subject as a whole anywhere. ... It is not a science, it is only the hope of a science" (James, 1902, p. 370).

Reading these lines in the context of the personal notes that L.S. Vygotsky made for himself in the 1920s in his *Notebooks*, one can understand why he always strove to determine the methodological foundations of his scientific activity in psychology — foundations that would make it possible to overcome the empiricism of the various versions of the psychology of consciousness. Yet how difficult this proved to be is attested by his footnote concerning research conducted within the framework of so-called classical behaviourism, then emerging in the United States — a footnote appended to one of the programmatic articles of this stage of his scientific work, "Consciousness as a Problem of the Psychology of Behaviour", discussed above (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 78—98), in which he continued to develop the ideas of his celebrated January 1924 address at the 2nd Psychoneurological Congress, published only in 1926 in a collection of scientific articles from the Institute of Experimental Psychology, edited by K.N. Kornilov (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 43—62).

I shall quote this footnote in its entirety: "The present article was already in proof — Vygotsky writes — when I acquainted myself with certain works on this subject belonging to psychologist-behaviourists. The problem of consciousness is posed and resolved by these authors in a manner close to the ideas developed here, as a problem of the relation between reactions (cf. 'verbalised behaviour')" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 98).

Therefore, even in our own day it is worth agreeing with Vygotsky's assessment that psychology "finds itself at present in a state in which it is still very far from the final formula of a geometric theorem that crowns the last argument — as was required to be proved. For us at present it is still important to outline what precisely is required to be proved, and only then to undertake the proof; first to formulate the problem, and only then to solve it" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 98).

The reason for this state of affairs lies not only in that methodological "untidiness" demonstrated by many of the scientific trends that arose in the period of the "open psychological crisis" — an untidiness that remains a birthmark of psychology to the present day and that sometimes takes the form of a conscious disregard for the very methodological necessity of clearly defining the subject of psychological investigation. The subject of investigation, understood as a hypothetically existing PRE-supposition, is systematically confused with the various characteristics of the "sensory impression" empirically given to each of us (I.M. Sechenov) as the "appearance of objective reality to the subject" (Galperin P.Ya.) — characteristics that have attracted the investigator's interest but that present themselves in the foreground only as certain empirical indicators and may, at best, furnish the basis for one or another equally empirical classification, yet cannot in principle disclose the essence of the objective reality which in the hypothesis presents itself as the subject of investigation, concealed behind the phenomena we are studying, but which ought to become a new "object" of our consciousness.

In effect, the parable "Of the Elephant and the Six Sages" models the situation in which even quite serious investigators — setting out to study what appears to be one and the same fragment of objective reality — frequently find themselves, forgetting the fundamental fact established by I.M. Sechenov (Sechenov, 1908, vol. 2): any fragment of objective reality appears to us in the form of a "sensory impression" — an "image of the world" (Leontiev, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 251—261), the "appearance of the object to the subject" (Galperin, 2023, p. 175). And in its content — as in a peculiar mirror — each of us is represented only by the past experience of his own activity, with all those limitations which arose in the course of that activity, many of which are generated both by our representations — whose content seems to us entirely adequate to reality — and by the capabilities of the research instruments we employ.

In the history of psychology itself, one may find dozens of examples of cases in which one and the same results of psychological experiments — virtually identical in their methodological procedures, yet conducted by investigators adhering to different theoretical positions — were terminologically registered in different concepts. Try to distinguish what is meant when one speaks of "meaningful perception" or its "categorisation", "uncon-

scious inference", "visual thinking", or "reproductive imagination". The discussions that arise in such contexts are, as a rule, scientifically sterile, for in the absence of new approaches to the subject of investigation they lawfully degenerate into disputes about words.

In this connection, a case comes to mind which was once described in the diary of our celebrated traveller N.N. Miklouho-Maclay. Upon arriving in Papua New Guinea in 1872 and entering into contact with the indigenous inhabitants for the first time, he noted: "What particularly surprised and at the same time interested them were two small bulls taken on board as live provisions for the crew: the natives could not take their eyes off them and asked me to give them one. Having learned the name of the animals from me, they tried not to forget it, repeating: 'byk', 'byk', 'byk'. ... On deck, one of the natives wished to see the bulls again. He addressed himself to me but, having forgotten the name 'byk', began asking about the 'large pig'. Not understanding him, I answered that there was no pig on the corvette; whereupon, in order to name the animal more precisely, he added that he wished to see the 'large Russian pig with teeth on its head'" (Miklouho-Maclay, 1947).

This example vividly illustrates a fundamental psychological fact: past experience, having "settled" in the neural network in the form of functional organs lawfully arising in the course of the subject's interaction with various fragments of objective reality, allows each of us to "see" new fragments of objective reality only through the "filters" of these previously formed and constantly forming functional organs — organs which, within the system of neurophysiological regulation of the subject's activity, ensure the adequacy of his behaviour under relatively stable conditions.

A most interesting observation is to be found in Vygotsky's work "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology" — one that, in my view, bears a certain relation to the content of the observation described by N.N. Miklouho-Maclay, and that in a certain measure illuminates Vygotsky's views of that period regarding the mechanisms of generalisation and the psychological role of sign-mediation as a qualitatively higher level of development of cognitive activity. "Having said, upon encountering what we call a cow, 'This is a cow,'" Vygotsky writes, "we add to the act of perception an act of thinking, of subsuming this particular perception under a general concept; a child, in naming things for the first time, performs genuine discoveries" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 313—314). And L.S. Vygotsky develops his thought further: "I do not see that this is a cow; indeed, one cannot see this (emphasis mine — *N.N.*). I see something large, black, moving, lowing, etc., and I understand that this is a cow, and this act is an act of classification, of subsuming a singular phenomenon under a class of similar phenomena, a systematisation of experience, etc. Thus, the very foundations and possibilities of scientific cognition of a fact are laid within language itself" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 314). The lines quoted belong to the initial period of Vygotsky's work on the manuscript of "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology", but already in this thought one may register his rejection of the ideas of so-called "analytic introspection", the concept and methods of which were developed by E. Titchener, who termed the kind of inference that Vygotsky makes here "the stimulus error" — since, in Titchener's view, the subject should describe the stimulus presented to him in the form of certain "objectless" sensory qualities.

It should be noted that Titchener himself later acknowledged the scientific limitations of such an approach to psychology. Here is what Vygotsky wrote in this regard: "A most curious example of this is to be found in E. Titchener. This consistent introspectionist and parallelist arrives at the conclusion that mental phenomena can only be described, not explained" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 413). And Vygotsky goes on to cite Titchener: "But if we were to try to confine ourselves to a purely descriptive psychology, ...we should find that there is in that case no hope of a real science of mind. Descriptive psychology would stand to scientific psychology in the same relation as the view of the world that a boy creates in his toy laboratory stands to the view of the experienced naturalist..." (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, p. 413).

However, L.S. Vygotsky at this period had not yet come to recognise that any image — as the "appearance of the object to the subject" (Galperin P.Ya.) — is constituted by a mode of action that has arisen within the system of the subject's activity and that exists within the system of neurophysiological regulation already as a functional organ — an "operative action-schema" (Galperin, 2023, pp. 539—554). These schemata therefore exist not "in language" but in the structure of the neurophysiological regulation of our activity, practically transforming the image of its conditions — which in turn allows us to employ the "sonic matter" of language differently for the conscious appropriation of content that is significant for the subject and that arises within the system of joint activity.

The awareness of this — at times profoundly contradictory — interrelationship between practical action and communication led L.S. Vygotsky, already at the close of 1932, to the necessity of revising the conception of "higher mental functions" he and his closest collaborators had been developing: "Higher and lower functions do not form two storeys: their number and names do not coincide", Vygotsky notes in his *Notebooks* at the end of 1932 (Vygotsky, 2017, p. 323). "But neither (do we hold to) our former understanding (emphasis mine — *N.N.*): a higher function is the mastery of a lower one (voluntary attention is the subordination of involuntary attention to oneself) — for this would mean precisely two storeys"

(Vygotsky, 2017, ibid.). And he goes on to note: "What is most important — what has no precedent in the organic world — is: a) the change of interfunctional connections, i.e., the change of the organisation of the organism and its material organ in the process of functional development: the organism and organ are determined by (subordinated to) functions. (Consciousness is precisely this pure activity, which stands in a special relation to the organism and the organ); b) one and the same function is performed by different processes; *ergo*, functions are not fixed to activities — (they) are polyvalent, polyfunctional, pure, free, instrumentally unfixed activities of consciousness. *Ergo*: function is no longer a function! Activity *sui generis*" (Vygotsky, 2017, ibid.).

These thoughts of L.S. Vygotsky concerning the "polyvalence" of functions and his understanding of consciousness as "pure activity" (Vygotsky, 2017, ibid.) mark a turning point in the development of his psychological thought. They signal a decisive rejection of the conception of the psyche as a set of static, once-and-for-all-given capacities whose potential — as functions — merely "manifests" upon encounter with stimuli. In their place, the idea of the generation of the "psychological" here and now, in the very fabric of activity itself, moves to the foreground.

But if, following L.S. Vygotsky and P.Ya. Galperin, we recognise that the "psychological" is not a "pure spirit" and not a passive imprint of reality but a special form of activity — equipped with means and oriented toward the TRANS-FORM-ation of the field of action — then we inevitably encounter a question that traditional, empirically oriented psychology preferred to circumvent: how is it possible to know that very objective reality of our psychological life itself, if it is always given to us only in the form of the "image of the field of action", mediated by our SUBJECTive experience?

The parable of the blind sages and the elephant, to which we turned above, models this problem with almost surgical precision. Each of the sages, limited in the means of investigation (touch alone) and relying on his past, empirically constituted experience, takes the newly arising image (the appearance) for something objective (the essence). In so doing, he "substantivates" his "sensory impression" as the result of his action, "endowing" the characteristic (property) of a fragment of objective reality with the status of an independent "object" — a column, a spear, or a snake.

In this parable — as in a distorting mirror — lies the essence of the methodological crisis about which L.S. Vygotsky wrote in "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology": the existence of a multiplicity of "schools" and "points of view" is often not evidence of the richness of science but a symptom of the fact that investigators, like the sages, dealing with SUBJECTively different appearances of one and the same fragment of objective reality, take those appearances for different essences.

But what does it mean to "take" reality as practice? It means overcoming that very "substantivation" of the appearance of which we spoke above. It means not merely seeking the essence concealed behind the appearance, employing one or another means of its "detection", but rather beginning consciously to create the necessary conditions for its APPEAR-ance — viewing the essence itself as something that must be reproduced in the very process of practical activity as the process of creating a new appearance of it. It is precisely this — seemingly "obvious" — train of thought, which made it possible to overcome the limitations of both the empiricism of the "cross-sectional" method and the metaphysics of the search for "pure essences", that was realised in domestic psychology by P.Ya. Galperin, who proposed the method of stage-by-stage formation as a method of re-creating phenomena — in essence, continuing the idea of L.S. Vygotsky expressed in his first publications of 1925—1926.

The essence of Galperin's approach consists in the fact that he was the first in the history of psychology to recognise that an understanding of the regularities that constitute psychology as an objective science is possible only on the basis of the planned reproduction of the phenomena it has traditionally studied — those phenomena, the task of investigating which — as states of consciousness — appeared, as I.P. Pavlov observed, "... hopeless to me, from a strictly scientific point of view. ... Of course, these states are for us a primary reality — they direct our everyday life, they condition the progress of human community. But there is one thing — to live by subjective states, and another — to truly scientifically analyse their mechanism. The more we work in the domain of conditional reflexes, the more we become convinced of how deeply and radically the decomposition of the subjective world into elements and their grouping by the psychologist differs from the analysis and classification of neural phenomena by the spatially thinking physiologist" (Pavlov, 1925, p. 227).

It was precisely P.Ya. Galperin who proposed not to describe the formed "ready-made" phenomenon (whether an image, a concept, a state, or a process), but to systematically re-create it, selecting the conditions necessary for this purpose. It must be emphasised that the method of stage-by-stage formation of mental actions and concepts is not merely a complex of experimental techniques that "have proved their practical efficacy in a number of applied domains, yet are hardly suited to serve as a general psychological theory" — as A.A. Leontiev remarked (Leontiev, 1994, p. 285) — but a genuinely scientific method enabling the disclosure of the essence of any given "psychological phenomenon" by one means alone: re-creating it, thereby functioning not as an external registrar of its presence or absence, but as the organiser of the very process of its emergence.

By what means, then, should the science be constructed for which the practical transformation of the

image of reality constitutes not an appendage to theory but the chief mode of cognising its essence? The answer to this question lies in the direction of a reconceptualisation of the classical scientistic ideal of science as a form of investigating the essence of phenomena — a reconceptualisation that requires a transition to a different, activity-based paradigm of psychology itself, as represented by P.Ya. Galperin in the theory of stage-by-stage formation of mental actions and concepts (Galperin, 2023).

And however paradoxical this thought may sound, in its development it lawfully discloses its dialectical essence — as graphically represented in the works of L.S. Vygotsky: first, as an uncompromising critique of so-called "second psychology", whose place is on the "scrapheap of history" (Vygotsky, 1982—1984, vol. 1, pp. 423—436; Vygotsky, 1928, pp. 25—46); and then — already towards the end of his life — as a formulation of the fundamental task of psychology as the science of psychic life (Vygotsky, 2017, pp. 427—428).

The third part of the present article will be devoted to an examination of the evolution of these views of L.S. Vygotsky and of their significance both for the development of psychological practice and for the formation of the very foundations of practical psychology.

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Поступила в редакцию 02.03.2026 — Received 2026.03.02
Поступила после рецензирования 09.03.2026 — Revised 2026.03.09
Принята к публикации 10.03.2026 — Accepted 2026.03.10
Опубликована 30.03.2026 — Published 2026.03.30