

DISCUSSIONS AND DISCOURSES
ДИСКУССИИ И ДИСКУРСЫ

Discovering the Great Royal Seal: New Reality of Vygotsky's Legacy

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The paper explores contemporary state of arts in the perception of cultural-historical theory (CHT) by the international scholarly community. On one hand, we do have a great number of publications exploring and advancing Vygotsky's legacy in many ways and directions. On the other hand, paradoxically, there is still no agreement about what CHT is as a theory, and what are its subject-matter, laws, principles and research method. The current state of arts could be expressed by the metaphorical words "Christianity without Christ". The problem is that the existing exposition of CHT appeared over 30 years back, when only a limited number of Vygotsky's original texts were available. But the new reality, with Vygotsky's legacy connected by the publication of a significant number of his unknown previously writings and recent archival findings, allows us to improve the existing exposition of CHT. This article provides an example of how this new reality brings solutions to several problems, such as 1) the title of the theory; 2) its subject-matter and 3) the system of laws of psychological development. The last part of the paper indicates several problems and issues to resolve in discovering CHT as a wholistic theoretical system.

Keywords: Vygotsky, cultural-historical theory, the development of higher psychological functions.

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The State of the Arts

Does cultural-historical theory (CHT) still exist? — the question might look naïve and even provocative. It provokes an immediate positive answer: yes, cultural-historical theory (CHT) does exist! Created in the 1920s–1930s, CHT does not belong to the history of psychology only, but rather it is living and powerful theory which informs contemporary research in early childhood development [14; 16; 17; 29; 31; 36], school learning and instruction [2; 4; 9; 25; 56; 57; 92], professional development [12; 15; 28; 30], social studies [12; 15; 28; 30], human-computer interactions [34; 49], second language acquisition of adults [11; 37; 38; 39] and many other fields.

Hundreds of researchers declare they are inspired or driven by Vygotsky's ideas and concepts [1; 2; 3; 8; 9; 22;

23; 24; 26; 29; 31; 40; 56; 59; 92; 94] in developing their own original theoretical approaches. Indeed, a great deal of work has been undertaken by international scholars [18; 22; 23; 24; 37; 38; 40] to discover and advance the cultural-historical theory.

Contemporary textbooks consider cultural-historical theory as one of the classical theories in the psychology of the 20th century along with Y. Bronfenbrenner and J. Piaget [55]. Encyclopedia Britannica has an article on Vygotsky, and Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning includes the chapter "Cultural-historical theory of development" [52]. The Internet is full of hundreds of sites presenting and representing the cultural-historical theory with different levels of accuracy. What other evidence do we need?

However, there is no coherent approach and acceptance of CHT within academia. In other words, the ma-

major issue is: does CHT represent a coherent theoretical system and if so what kind of system is CHT? If CHT does exist as an integrated theoretical system, is it possible to expose it in an integral wholistic way and form? The situation looks so that we have a huge number of different, sometimes conflicting, interpretations, and interpretations of interpretations. Some researchers (we can conditionally call them post-Vygotskian or neo-Vygotskian scholars) consider Vygotsky's theory as an unfinished project, i.e. as a more or less developed combination of several powerful insights, a fusion of general ideas, deliberations and conceptions. According to this vision, cultural-historical conception is rather an approach, not the theory as the system of theoretical tools. Therefore, it creates a powerful, but very general theoretical "umbrella-like" framework for the concrete research programs and projects. It gives freedom to the researchers to interpret or re-interpret Vygotsky's ideas according to their wishes and purposes. Marsico [43] describes this in the following way:

"After all, ... Vygotsky represents one among the giants on whose shoulders anybody jumps picking up pieces of his complex theoretical framework and using them as a self-explaining theoretical umbrella for making any sort of scientific claims. Very often one can read in academic papers sentences like "According to Vygotsky's theory..." or "Following Vygotsky's perspective ..." as a façade of a scientific kind in the polyphony of the research's supermarket" (p.v).

For others, the cultural-historical theory is a complex system of interrelated concepts and principles, the theoretical framework the research could be built on, and therefore, it can be used as analytical tools for conducting concrete research, i.e. for data collection and data analysis. Accordingly, this kind of research requires not only a general theoretical framework, but also careful selection of proper analytical tools for doing the empirical or experimental study according to the research question/s and methodology requirements. In some sense, it does not give a researcher a freedom of interpretations of concepts and principles, because every theoretical concept has strict theoretical content that should be properly understood before being used as an analytical tool. The first (neo-Vygotskian) vision allows great freedom in interpretations of the theoretical contents of concepts, whereas second one requires deep study to comprehend Vygotsky's theory as a system, i.e. the system of interrelated theoretical concepts, laws, principles, and research methods.

The state of arts exposes an interesting picture. On one hand, we do have a great number of publications exploring and advancing Vygotsky's legacy in many ways and directions. On the other hand, paradoxically, there is no agreement about what CHT is as a theory, what is its subject-matter, laws, principles and the research method. There is nothing bad in this:

"The best thing that can happen to a scholar is that someone else takes her idea and elaborates it further. Replication, reification, and even taking care lead to no further theoretical advancement, since they tend to maintain the orthodoxy of the original formulation. The most faithful student makes the worst service to the teacher since

she may merely reproduce or echo the teacher's voice. New ideas will emerge only in the process or cannibalization, dissection, and remaking. Thus, just "taking care" is not enough for the process of science making. What we need is "cultivating" new possibilities to understand the phenomenon under investigation" [44, p.v].

I would agree with this and I am against orthodoxy. However, the situation described in this quotation requires an important clarification: all this is correct *only when the original ideas of the teacher are properly understood*, at least in the first approximation. You can never be successful in improving any complex system if you do not understand what it is and what it is for. Improving without understanding always leads to nothing and looks miserable and pathetic. And I am not the only one who cares about this:

"Nevertheless, if the misconceptions lead to developments that capture the imagination, spur research, and influence educational practice, is this not a positive outcome? The problem is that, in lieu of discussions and applications of key principles, the rich understandings provided by the theory do not receive a hearing in the forum of professional ideas" [25, p.114].

F. Mikhailov, one of the leading experts in Vygotsky's studies, expressed this in a very strong way saying that most Western scholars have fundamentally misunderstood Vygotsky (Mikhailov, 2001) as his ideas "have been substantially distorted by commentators, disciples, and users to meet their own needs" [47, p. 11]. This is in line with Cazden [19] who argued that most references to Vygotsky's work are selective, employed to fortify an author's pre-existing beliefs rather than to reconceptualize prior understandings through a careful and extensive reading of his work.

The situation though is more complex and contains a risk of discreditation of the entire theory. Saying this I share Gredler's point that:

"Accurately assessing the potential of... theory is in serious jeopardy when only fragments of a few concepts attract attention and the limited information becomes popular. Researchers and practitioners begin to make inferences and extrapolations from the limited information, but such views cannot reflect the theorist's orienting framework. The connections between ideas, "the holistic structure (Gestalt) of a scientist's thinking necessary to understand the meanings of the elements" is missing" [25, p. 114].

This leads to a more serious outcome:

"... ultimately, the theory itself is often discredited when the popular view is found wanting. This problem has not yet occurred with Vygotsky's theoretical system. However, his theory is the most recent perspective to be discussed largely in terms of popular misconceptions" [25, p. 114].

Summarizing this point, Gredler describes this by comparing Piaget's phrase that "fragments of an idea were assimilated into existing schemas" [25, p. 128]. What I can add to this is that such assimilation sometimes happens without any signs of accommodation. I agree, Vygotsky's theory is not yet discredited, but I also agree that it is a victim of popular misconceptions.

This means that the overall situation has not changed much since the 1980s when Luria declared: “Vygotsky managed to create a psychological system that has not yet been fully studied” [41, p. 44]. The current state of arts could be expressed by the metaphorical words of Ronald Miller: “Christianity without Christ” [48, p. 53]. This inevitably leads to fragmentation and simplification of Vygotsky’s ideas as well as to a series of misinterpretations and misconceptions which dominates in contemporary studies, as several researchers express their concerns about [65; 13; 6; 7; 48].

The problem

It might seem that the main problem which has generated such a controversial and contradictory situation with Vygotsky’s legacy is that he did not leave a separate book that presents the theory in a systematic way; instead, the ideas are scattered across different works and their connections are not always obvious and clearly highlighted. Yet, this is only a part of the problem, and not even a major one. Contemporary neo-Vygotskians could easily do the same as they do, even if such a book by Vygotsky were written. Quite often they do not care that their interpretations directly contradict the original meaning given in Vygotsky’s original texts. Just an example: Holzman argues:

“Vygotsky seems to be saying that learning-leading-development is created collectively. This suggests that the ZPD is more usefully understood as a process, as a spatio-temporal entity, an activity rather than an actual zone, space, or distance” [32, p. 29].

I could understand why the authors of a Wikipedia article refuse to define ZPD as a *distance* between two levels of development as Vygotsky formulated in his famous definition [72, c. 42], but what remains a mystery is that high-class experts in this field deny the idea of distance and space as though Vygotsky’s original definition does not exist at all. From the fact that learning-leading-development is being created collectively, it does not at all follow that the zone itself must be understood as an activity. On the contrary, Vygotsky says that teaching-learning (obuchenie) *creates* ZPD or occurs within ZPD [79, c. 264] being focused to support “the buds of development” [72, c. 16]; so, ZPD **is not an activity** if we follow Vygotsky’s logic expressed in the original definition.

Where is the problem then? In my opinion, the problem is that the contemporary understanding of Vygotsky’s theory, the existing picture of the theory so to say, is not a contemporary picture in its origins. This picture arose a long time ago — namely, in the 70–80s of the last century on the basis of a very limited number of Vygotsky’s works published and available to researchers. Starting from *Mind in Society* [74] — the cocktail-like compilation of separate fragments of various works by Vygotsky mixed with editorial inserts and paraphrases — this picture was doomed to be very fragmented, superficial, and contradictory. In the Preface [74] the Editors honestly warned readers of “significant liberties” they had taken with Vygotsky’s texts, saying that:

“The reader will encounter here not a literal translation of Vygotsky but rather our edited translation of Vygotsky, from which we have omitted material that seemed redundant and to which we have added material that seemed to make his points clearer . . . We realize that in tampering with the original we may have distorted history” [74, p. 10].

At that time, however, there was no other way to introduce Vygotsky to the Western audience, having a very limited number of Vygotsky’s original manuscripts. Michael Cole’s Prologue to *The Essential Vygotsky* [53, p. xi] makes clearer why these drastic editorial changes were considered necessary at the time. The publication of the *Collected Works* in Russian and in English, paradoxically, did not change the situation significantly. Unfortunately, neo-Vygotskians follow the tradition and in many cases continue taking “significant liberties” of interpretations and paraphrasing, even though these interpretations directly contradict Vygotsky’s ideas.

In the 80s–90s, due to limited sources of Vygotsky’s original texts available, there could be no other, completer and more accurate picture — a synthesized picture of a holistic theory. But this does not mean that there can be no other picture now. Why? Because over the past 20 years, what I call “the new reality” of the legacy of Vygotsky has emerged. In the next parts of the article, I will show what this new reality is and how, on its basis, we can begin work on creating and reconstructing a holistic, systemic presentation of Vygotsky’s theory; that is, to present a new vision of the theory precisely as a system with a precisely defined subject-matter, research methods, a complete set of laws, and a system of basic interconnected concepts and principles. In my opinion, the new reality puts this task on the agenda and provides an opportunity for its solution. I am fully aware that to restore the theory as an integral system requires collective efforts, and I am ready to contribute to this project. In this article I would like to outline possible paths to go. The challenge of time is very clear: either we remain inside the already existing picture of Vygotsky’s theory and continue to assimilate new sources without accommodation, by adapting them to existing schemes, or we will try to take the next step and begin work on synthesizing a new reality — reconstructing CHT as the holistic theory trying to avoid superficial interpretations and giving the voice to Vygotsky himself.

Mission impossible?

I begin this part of the article from the words of Meshcheryakov, who claims:

“Vygotsky’s conceptual approach is very complex and multifaceted, and it certainly cannot be scraped from the surface of the author’s texts. He had too little time to follow through on all the implications of his theory, to systematize and present them in an extended academic fashion. Therefore, we must not expect to find finished and complete conception in all of his texts, although these texts may be used as an implicit, internal form for reconstructing a more comprehensive conception” [45, c. 156].

But even the task of reconstructing a more comprehensive conception is nearly impossible to solve. Even a

very brief analysis of the literature shows that there are a number of insurmountable obstacles and barriers that can be classified as follows:

1) Quick and rapid evolution of Vygotsky's theoretical views [10; 45; 46];

2) Several key Vygotsky's works remained inaccessible and not translated [104];

3) Poor translation of Vygotsky's texts [27; 26; 58; 66].

Each of them is seriously reasoned and justified. Thus, speaking about the first obstacle, the editors of *Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky* made a strong claim:

“A close reading of Vygotsky's work shows how his ideas developed and were transformed over a very brief period of time. It is difficult to reconcile some of the writing from the early 1920s with that which was produced during the last 2 years of his life. These rapid changes, coupled with the fact that his work was not published in chronological order, make synthetic summaries of his work difficult” [10, p. 2].

What complicates the whole issue (Obstacle 2) is that not all Vygotsky's key texts, even the published ones, were included into the *Collected Works* being unavailable even for Russian researchers and remaining untranslated. Poor translation (Obstacle 3) began to be sporadically discussed already in the beginning of 1980s (see, for example, [27]). The more texts became available the more issues with poor translation came to the attention of researchers [25; 58; 65; 66]. The difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that translations of Vygotsky's original works often are heavily abridged and edited, which has led to the statement that “existing translations are marred by mistakes and outright falsifications” [62, p. 475].

Taken together, these obstacles and barriers produce a cumulative effect, which gives the impression that Vygotsky either did not have a holistic theory at all, or if it was, then it is impossible to make its systemic synthesis. Vygotsky himself did not leave such a book, but almost a century after his death, none of Vygotsky's numerous followers neither tried to do this nor did they even put such a task on the agenda. On the contrary, leading Vygotsky's scholars consider this task impossible and the goal unreachable in principle. The common opinion sounds like a famous movie title – *Mission Impossible*. Yet, is it?

New reality with Vygotsky's legacy

In the 1980s, when the Russian edition of the *Collected Works* (1982–1984) was published, a significant number of Vygotsky's works remained unknown and were not included into that edition. Some of them remained practically unavailable as they were originally published in the 1920s and 1930s in a very limited number of copies; others existed only in a form of manuscripts, diaries, and notes in archives. The situation started to change gradually, as previously unavailable texts began to appear creating a new reality in Vygotsky's legacy. I give only several examples to clarify the point.

Among seminal and foundational works, *Concrete Psychology of Man* was published in 1986 [80], *The Problem of Cultural Development of the Child* [69] was

republished in 1991 [82], *Imagination and Creativity in Childhood* (1930) in 1991 [83]. On the other hand, archival materials started to be published, for example [76]. Many of these materials, such as *Concrete Human Psychology* [81] were translated, and included to separate volumes, such as *The Vygotsky Reader* [61], *The Essential Vygotsky* [52].

On the other hand, some foundational works are now available only in Russian and still unavailable in English; we do have in Russian the whole text of *The Problem of Age* [79, 88] which was only partly presented in both Russian and English *Collected Works*. We do have the complete text of the *Pedology of Adolescent* [70; 71] whereas only 4 Chapters are available in the *Collected Works*. We do have the complete text of *The Intellectual Development of Children in a Process of Instruction* [72] from which only pieces of two chapters are available in English [74]. *The Problem of Development and Disintegration of Higher Psychological Functions* [73; 90] is not yet translated. And since 2001 we do have *Lectures on Pedology* in Russian [88], but only one out of these seven lectures was available in English [61] and the whole book is only recently translated [91].

In addition to this, a series of publications of previously unknown scientific diaries of Vygotsky, published and commented by Zavershneva [97; 98; 99; 100; 101; 102; 103] does not only allow access to new sources, but shows Vygotsky's thinking and opens an “internal laboratory of thought”. This “archival revolution” is culminated with a book [104].

I should limit myself here with a few examples and there are many more to take into account. Yet, now, with a huge number of sources recently available, we have a new situation, a new reality with Vygotsky's original texts. This new reality allows us to make a new step in discovering the cultural-historical theory as a system or at least to significantly improve the traditional picture. Because of these new sources, there are some aspects in the theory which now can be clarified on the basis of Vygotsky's original texts. There are some theoretical links which were hidden and now became clear; there are some examples of concrete research conducted by Vygotsky and his collaborators which were unknown, but now can help to clarify the research method and its links to the theoretical concepts. There are some general laws of development of human higher psychological functions which Vygotsky presented and explained in these new sources, which for many years were unavailable for Western audience. All these might contribute to the on-going process of discovering the cultural-historical theory. In the following part of the paper I show how this new reality contributes and might contribute much more in solving the problem of presenting CHT as a holistic theoretical system. I also will show how this new reality might help us rethink obstacles as challenges which might be met and resolved.

Obstacles or challenges?

Quick and rapid evolution of Vygotsky's theoretical views, which was considered as an obstacle preventing

or making difficult the synthetic summary of Vygotsky's system in 1980s, is not an obstacle anymore.

In many cases it is not even difficult to restore the chronological order of Vygotsky's writings. For example, *The Consciousness as a Problem for the Psychology of Behavior* [85, pp. 63–68], and *The Methods of Reflexological and Psychological Investigation* [85, pp. 35–50] are considered to be related to the same stage of Vygotsky's work. Thus, the first was published in 1925 [67], the second in 1926 [68]. However, they were written in an opposite order and reflect different stages of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution. *The Methods of Reflexological and Psychological Investigation* coincides with the title of the presentation Vygotsky did on the Second All-Russian Congress on Psycho-neurology on January 6, 1924. The main idea of that paper was to show that reflexological methods might be used in psychological research. Yet, *The Consciousness as a Problem for the Psychology of Behavior* which is critical to any attempt to apply reflexological methods to psychology definitely belongs to another period of Vygotsky's creative theoretical evolution (more on this in [64]).

Due to the contemporary publication of Vygotsky's archival materials and notebooks [104] and deep investigation of key periods of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution [7] *there are no more blank spaces left*. These publications allow us to not only to reconstruct completely all key periods of Vygotsky's theoretical pathway, but to identify absolutely clearly when, at what year, and sometimes the exact dates all his published and unpublished works (including preparatory materials and notes) were written. This might help to avoid the situation when ideas from different periods are heaped together and the evolution of Vygotsky's position is undervalued or simply ignored.

This new reality provides the opportunity to overcome the second obstacle, that is limited access to original texts of Vygotsky mentioned above. The task to study Vygotsky's theory as a system should not be limited by the *Collected Works*; other sources unavailable in 1980s and 1990s and available now, significantly enrich our understanding of the conceptual content of Vygotsky's theory. Due to the collective efforts, now, in the beginning of the 21st century, there are no fundamental texts of Vygotsky which are unknown and/or unavailable despite not all of them being available in English.

What existed and what was absolutely correctly considered as obstacles that make a synthetic summary of Vygotsky's theory difficult or even impossible does not exist anymore. Great amounts of materials, which are now available in Russian and English, should be considered as valuable (and sometimes exclusive) sources for discovering the cultural-historical theory and building a synthetic summary. This does not mean that the discovery of the cultural-historical theory in all its complexity is not difficult; yes, it is difficult, but not impossible. Yes, it requires deep reading and comparative analysis showing directions of Vygotsky's theoretical pathway, its turning points and dramatical contradictions; it requires deep analysis of conceptual contents and contexts, but this job must be done, and it has to be done now. In the next section I will show some examples of which con-

troversial issues have been resolved and which problems can be resolved if we consider the new reality.

Making mission possible

There are several generally accepted, or widespread, provisions that, due to the fact that they are widely multiplied, have not become the subject of a critical attitude. The new reality, which opened Vygotsky's previously inaccessible texts, allows a critical review of these issues. The scope of this article does not allow a detailed discussion of all these issues and this requires further collective work, so I focus only on a few that seem to me indisputable.

The title of the theory

This question seems unimportant and inconsequential. A tradition has been established when Russian researchers use the term “cultural-historical theory”, whereas Western scholars prefer the term “sociocultural theory”. However, the label matters. The point of view is very widespread that Vygotsky himself never called his theory “cultural-historical”; even more there is a claim that this term was introduced in mid-30s by critics with defamatory aims and have been later accepted by Vygotsky's followers in consequence of the mechanism of “identification with the aggressor” [35].

The new reality with Vygotsky's legacy solves this issue completely and irrevocably. In recently re-published Preface to Leontiev's book “The development of memory” [89] we see the following definition:

“In its essence the... theory of the historical (or cultural-historical) development in psychology means the theory of the *higher psychological functions* (logical memory, voluntary attention, verbal thinking, volitional processes, etc.) — nothing more, and nothing less” [89, p. 200].

Thus, Vygotsky does not only give the title of his theory, but clearly identifies its subject matter — the cultural-historical theory of development of higher psychological functions. The original source, thus, clearly shows that the title of the theory was introduced by Vygotsky himself before 1931, but not by the critics in the mid 1930s.

The problem, however, is deeper: both “cultural” and “historical” mean something important. “Cultural” addresses human culture and separates it from organic development. “Cultural” relates to the cultural development of behavior as a theoretical concept [86, p. 7]. “Cultural” relates to “social”; “... everything cultural is social. Culture is both a product of social life and of the social activity of man” [86, p. 106].

The word “historical” in the title highlights the nature of human higher psychological functions both in the history of mankind (phylogenesis) and individual history of development of the child (ontogenesis). Individual development of the child and adolescent, and historical development of cultural forms of behavior are the same type of development [79, p. 221].

The subject-matter of CHT

It looks strange, but there is still no unity among researchers on what is the subject matter of cultural-his-

torical theory. Literature either circumvents this issue and does not give an exact answer, or captures any one aspect, fitting the theory into the framework of classical psychological academic traditions. This uncertainty and diffusion leads to the state of arts where Vygotsky's theory is often classified as sort of social constructivism [33], or as a theory of social development [5], a theory of learning and development [3], or simply as a theory of the development of thinking [25; 26]. Indeed, in Vygotsky's writings one can find deep ideas about the interconnectedness of education and development, the development of thinking, social development, etc., but all these provisions do not exhaust and do not answer the question "What is the subject of cultural-historical theory?" And vice versa, to understand the full deepness of these ideas and correctly interpret them is only possible if you see that these ideas were formulated through the prism of the main problem, for the solution of which the theory was created.

Vygotsky's theory was the answer to the problem formulated by W. Wundt — is it possible to objectively study higher psychological processes (functions) in human beings? Wundt's answer was negative; Vygotsky's answer was positive. Already established higher psychological functions, functions per se, are not available for objective study. But if we make the *entire process* of their development and becoming the subject matter of research, the opportunity for their objective scientific study appears.

"The origin and development of the higher psychological functions, their construction and composition, their way of functioning and their mutual connections and interdependencies, the laws that govern their course and fate — all this is constituting the exact content and the true subject matter of these investigations" [89, c. 200].

Thus, the subject matter of CHT is the process of development of the higher mental functions of man in all its basic aspects: 1) their origins 2) their construction 3) their composition 4) their mutual connections and interdependencies and 4) the way of functioning. The fundamental issue is the idea of development: to explain the development of higher psychological functions not from its properties, but to deduce its properties from its development [85, p. 126].

An exact definition of the subject matter of theory is not a simple formality. This relates to the problem, namely the problem of lower (elementary, biologically driven) psychological functions and higher (cultural) psychological functions. This is a complex problem that has been brilliantly solved in cultural-historical theory: but I will dwell briefly on only one aspect. Secondary literature, referring to the cultural-historical theory, ascribes to higher psychological functions not only voluntary attention, intentional memory, and logical thought (which is correct), but also "problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes" [38, p. 1–2] which looks confusing and very embarrassing. Slightly changing the clear and intelligible "higher psychological function" to "higher mental capacities" [38, p. 1–2] or even "higher functioning" completely

eliminates the opportunity to understand Vygotsky's original message and leads to the fact that they are mixed in vague terminological constructions, like "lower and higher elementary functioning" [8, p. 25] which strictly and directly contradicts Vygotsky's theoretical model. As a result, Vygotsky is credited with the idea that "The general logic of development, Vygotsky maintains, is associated with the transformation of natural mental functions into higher ones" [63, p. 151]. This take is so widely disseminated that no one doubts that it accurately reflects the concept of theory.

The new reality with Vygotsky's legacy allows us to say that this view needs substantial refinement. In *The Problem of Development and Disintegration of Higher Psychological Functions* [73; 90] Vygotsky with great details explains the dialectics of relations of higher and lower psychological functions and gives the clear answer: higher psychological functions are special functional systems "that are not a direct continuation or development of an elementary function, but represent a whole in which elementary mental functions exist as one of the instances that make up the whole" [90, p. 13].

The lower functions, of course, are involved as integral components of the higher ones, while they unconditionally transform. However, lower functions in no case determine the composition of the higher function due to the fact that *the higher functions have a different nature and origin*. Moreover, having become an instance in the composition of a new whole, lower functions begin to work according to the laws of this new whole — this is the essence of the matter.

The very fact of the publication of this Vygotsky's report calls into question the widespread belief that in the last years of his life Vygotsky abandoned (or even simply rejected) the ideas of the cultural-historical theory developed in 1927–1930. However, it was precisely established that this report was made at a conference of the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine in April 1934 [73, p. 364]. In other words, three months before his death, Vygotsky continued to assert that "the problem of higher psychological functions is the central problem of the whole psychology of man" [73, p. 364].

The transition from studying the genetic processes of the emergence of higher functions to studying their development from the point of view of changing interfunctional relationships was the essence of the last stage of the development of CHT. The first results of this new research program were presented by Vygotsky in that report. We could conclude that at all stages of the development of CHT, the process of development of higher psychological functions remained the main subject-matter of the theory.

It is a pity, this late-stage work of Vygotsky, which significantly contributes to the CHT and allows us to clarify the relations between lower and higher psychological functions, is not yet available in English. This is one more of many other examples of how the new reality challenges the limitations, fragmentation, and even fallacy of the existing picture of the cultural-historical theory presented in contemporary literature.

Laws of psychological development

No scientific theory, in the classical sense of the word, can be called such if it is not built on discovered and experimentally justified objective laws: Newton's theory, for example, is impossible without the three basic laws of mechanics. Yet, are there objective laws for explaining complex mental phenomena that are subjective in nature? Contemporary psychology is actively discussing this issue and these discussions are either calming down or going back on the agenda. Cultural-historical theory answers this question unambiguously — if the subject matter of the theory is the process of development of higher psychological functions, then the task is to identify the universal and general laws of their development. If psychological development is an objective process, then it is necessary to identify the laws of development of higher functions, the laws “which govern their course and fate” [89, c. 200].

Vygotsky's invaluable contribution to developmental psychology is that he identified and experimentally justified the general objective laws of development of higher psychological functions. However, the literature, built on outdated reality and based on a very fragmented view of the theory as a whole, gives the same fragmentary and contradictory picture when it comes to the laws of development. Thus, Mahn claims that “Vygotsky discovered two fundamental laws” [42, p. 63]. Gredler and Shields [26] speak about 3 general laws of cultural-historical theory, Meshcheryakov [45; 46] and Obukhova [51] present different lists of four laws each. The bulk of researchers, however, is limited to references to only one, the most famous law — the general genetic law [86, p. 106] in best case scenario, or simply to its abridged and incorrect translation in the *Mind in Society* [74, p. 57]. These different lists are full of inconsistencies, incorrect references to Vygotsky's original texts, inaccuracies, or subjective interpretations. For example, the law which Vygotsky defined as “the law of the transition [of the child] from direct, innate, natural forms and methods of behavior to mediated, artificial psychological functions” [79, p. 221], is called “the law of mediation” [46, p. 162] or the “law of the transmission” [26, p. 50].

It might sound unbelievable, but now, after nearly a hundred years from the time the theory appeared, there is no research presenting the complete and systematic list of laws of psychological development which could be found in Vygotsky's original writings. Secondary literature gives some general understanding of Vygotsky's laws, but: 1) the numbers of laws in different lists do not match; 2) the formulations of laws are not always given accurately but in accordance with the authors' interpretation and approach, rather than in agreement with Vygotsky's; 3) some of them are based on wrong translations; 4) some important original sources where Vygotsky had formulated the general laws of development are not considered. Even the question of how many laws of psychological development is presented in Vygotsky's texts causes confusion and bewilderment among neo-Vygotskians.

Again, the new reality with Vygotsky's legacy provides an accurate answer to this question. The first law of psychological development that cultural-historical theory based on is the law of four stages of development as the “extremely important genetic law that character-

izes the development of all higher mental functions — of logical memory, voluntary attention, and thinking in concepts” [87, p. 103]. Three more laws are presented and explained with great details in the *Pedology of an Adolescent* [87, pp. 167–171]. Together with the general genetic law [86, p. 106] this makes up 5 laws. It is amazing that all of these Vygotsky's works are accessible; all that is needed is to work carefully with the *Collected Works*. Yes, the voice of Vygotsky himself is almost inaudible in the chorus of modern interpreters.

The new reality with the legacy of Vygotsky presents surprises even to those who think that this list of 5 laws is the final one. In the recently translated *Lectures on Pedology* [88; 91], four more laws of psychological development (laws of differentiation and subordination of psychological functions) are systematically presented and discussed in Lecture 5. In this lecture, Vygotsky does not only formulate and explain these laws, he shows how they are interrelated and interconnected and gives a huge number of examples showing how these laws work at different stages (psychological ages) of child development.

New reality and new opportunities

Cultural-historical theory **does exist as a theoretical system** and the new reality makes it possible to discover the cultural-historical theory as a system, i.e. the system of laws, theoretical concepts, and principles. The time is coming to discover the theory as deeply connected to the research method, where theoretical analytical tools and research analytical tools constitute the cultural-historical genetic research methodology. Doing this we will find what kinds of new opportunities the cultural-historical theory might provide for educational research in the 21st Century.

The task to present Vygotsky's theory in synthetic summary is still challenging, but not impossible. What we need is to include texts which recently became available (including these not translated to English yet) into already available sources which we can use to solve the task of fully discovering the psychological system Vygotsky had created. There is no single book where Vygotsky presents his system as a whole; however, there are new sources where he introduces concepts, laws, and principles being clearly formulated and theoretically interrelated; there are texts where we can find concrete examples of how those theoretical analytical tools work to study experimentally the process of psychological development. The obstacle is that we still deal with the tradition when ideas from different periods are heaped together and the evolution of Vygotsky's position is undervalued or simply ignored. In contrast to this, the cultural-historical theory might be presented in the way it was developed during two key stages: 1) 1927–1931 and 2) 1932–1934 [104; 18]. We need to explain the theoretical continuity of these two stages as well as differences between them; we need and we can present and explain the concepts and principles developed during these stages and theoretical links between them.

We should as much as we can reduce the tradition of interpretations of interpretations, and focus on collective generative understanding of what Vygotsky said himself, what were the original psychological meanings of his theoretical “messages” since the only way to understanding is to reconstruct the theoretical content of the theory in all its key components based on Vygotsky’s original texts. Otherwise, without giving the voice to Vygotsky, we will be doomed to remain in the situation which Miller describes as “Christianity without Christ” in contemporary sociocultural studies [48, p. 54].

Final remarks

The new reality with Vygotsky’s legacy, with a huge amount of sources become recently available allows to start a business that even 20 years ago seemed impossible. This new reality allows us to make a new step in discovering the cultural-historical theory as a system. Because of these new sources, there are some aspects in the theory which now can be clarified on the basis of Vygotsky’s original texts. My article is focused on several examples, and there is much more to do. There are some theoretical links which were hidden and now became clear; there are some examples of concrete research conducted by Vygotsky and his collaborators which were unknown, but now can help to clarify the research method and its links to the theoretical concepts. And finally, there are some general laws of development of human

higher psychological functions which Vygotsky presented and explained in these new sources, which for many years were unavailable for Western audience. All these might contribute to the on-going process of discovering the cultural-historical theory. Cultural and historical theory was a fundamental discovery, but for historical and cultural reasons, it itself remains undiscovered for the global psychological community and even for those who identify themselves as Vygotskian, neo- or post-Vygotskian.

Some people who are happy with the state of arts might consider this task as a sort of Utopia. Probably it is. However, cultural-historical theory is a treasure which we should learn how to use. Otherwise, we are at risk to be a pauper, described by Mark Twain:

The King turned to Tom, and said kindly “My poor boy, how was it that you could remember where I hid the Seal when I could not remember it myself?” “Ah, my King, that was easy, since I used it divers days.” “Used it- yet could not explain where it was?” “I did not know it was that they wanted. They did not describe it, your Majesty.” “Then how used you it?” The red blood began to steal up into Tom’s cheeks, and he dropped his eyes and was silent. “Speak up, good lad, and fear nothing,” said the King. “How used you the Great Seal of England?” Tom stammered a moment, in a pathetic confusion, then got it out— “To crack nuts with!”

We do not have reasons to say that we did not know it was that they wanted, and nobody described it. Vygotsky did tell and his voice is worth being heard.

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Что нам делать с «Большой Королевской Печатью»: новая реальность в наследии Выготского

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В статье исследуется современное состояние дел в восприятии культурно-исторической теории (КИТ) международным научным сообществом. С одной стороны, у нас есть множество публикаций, в которых исследуется и развивается наследие Выготского во многих отношениях и направлениях. С другой стороны, как это ни парадоксально, нет единого мнения о том, что такое КИТ как теория, каковы ее предмет, законы, принципы и метод исследования. Современное состояние дел можно выразить метафорическими словами «христианство без Христа». Проблема в том, что существующее представление о КИТ возникло более 40 лет назад, когда исследователям было доступно лишь ограниченное количество оригинальных текстов Выготского. Новая реальность с наследием Л.С. Выготского, связанная с публикацией значительного числа его работ, неизвестных ранее, и недавние архивные находки позволяют улучшить существующее представление о КИТ. В статье приводятся примеры того, как эта новая реальность позволяет решить несколько проблем, таких как: 1) название теории; 2) предмет КИТ и 3) система законов психологического развития. В последней части статьи обозначается несколько проблем, которые необходимо и можно решить, если представить КИТ как единую и целостную теоретическую систему.

Ключевые слова: Выготский, культурно-историческая теория, развитие психических функций.

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