

Human World-Outlook Evolution: From L.S. Vygotsky to Modern Times

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Abstract

The article in an interpretive way explores connection between the modern theory of personal world-outlook evolution and the key points of cultural-historical theory by Lev S. Vygotsky. It is shown that world-outlook results from consistently stage by stage developing certain world-images that evolve during all human life. They include mythopoetic, natural-philosophical, universal-symbolic and scientific world images. The authors dwell on Vygotsky's ideas about a word as a means of attention focus, on the importance of imagination for expansion and enrichment of child's experience and for development of creative activity. Game is seen as the source of children development in both world-outlook evolution theory and Vygotsky's concept. The authors come to the conclusion that studies of development of the world-look enrich theoretical framework of cultural psychology

Keywords: cultural-historical theory, theory of world-outlook evolution, world-view, unity of ontogenesis and phylogeny, law of cultural development of higher mental functions.

1. Introduction

Human world-outlook is a complex psychological structure which is studied in psychology, philosophy, sociology and pedagogy. We would like to mention that the terms world-outlook is the translation of the Russian term "mirovideniye" that literally means "seeing the world" in a wide sense of the word and stands for an integral view of the world. World-outlook reflects the reality in its integrity and the whole variety of manifestations; it enables to see the world as the whole through the prism of sensual variety "now" and "here". At the same time, it is based on spiritual experience of society and socio-cultural environment.

In the given context, it is highly relevant to refer to the cultural-historical theory by Lev S. Vygotsky. His breakthrough theory reads that human mind and consciousness evolve by internalization of social interaction. "This developmental process occurs both historically and within an individual's lifespan" (Sawyer, 2014). In this connection, the scientist wrote that "we cannot master the truth about personality itself so long as mankind has not mastered the truth about society itself" (Vygotsky, 1997a: 342). His theory states that personal world-outlook develops up to the teenage period when a child actively accumulates certain experience of scientific judgment of the world as the highest form of world-outlook. At preschool age, where emotional, sensual and figurative structures of child's consciousness dominate, only a rough draft of outlook is formed. However, it becomes the background either for a complete world-image in which various world-images (mythopoetic, philosophical, religious and scientific) are united or a mosaic-like picture in which these world-images are not connected with each other.

Recent decades have seen a real surge of interest to cultural-historical theory by Vygotsky in psychology and in many other humanitarian disciplines - sociology, cultural anthropology, pedagogy, social engineering and others (Ratner, 1991; Bodrova and Leong, 2006; Sawyer, 2014). Vygotsky's theory is of special interest for the given research because it treats development of the higher mental functions as the subject of theoretical and experimental analysis. First, the theoretical approach to human development introduced in the cultural-historical theory is of primary importance for our study: "...development is not simply a function which can be determined entirely by X units of heredity and Y units of environment. It is an historical complex, which at any stage reflects its past content. In other words, the artificial separation of heredity and environment points us in a fallacious direction; it obscures the fact that development is an uninterrupted process which feeds upon itself; that it is not a puppet which can be controlled by jerking two strings" (Vygotsky, 1993: 282)

Second, Vygotsky's insightful idea about a word as the means of focusing attention (Vygotsky, 1997b) is crucial for understanding world-outlook evolution. As a result of this attention focus, a number of objects which have the same name start to have similar properties based on the general idea of the name that leads to formation of a concept which becomes a category. The researcher writes that "the word analyzes the world; the word is the first means of analysis" (Vygotsky, 1997b: 202). He defines outlook as the characteristic of behavior of a person as a whole, as the cultural attitude to the outer world. Vygotsky stated that during first years of life, sometimes up to puberty period, a child has no world outlook in the true sense of the word. In connection with this statement, we also consider evolution of children's outlook, cultural attitude to the world in terms of cultural-historical logic and according to the principle of ontogenesis and phylogeny unity. The task of educating a free, spiritually rich person can be solved by creation of pedagogical conditions for expansion of borders of children's world-outlook integrity. We believe that this approach can become the background for formation of well-rounded outlook of the person in future. Sensible nature, intelligence of the world-view assumes the unity of sensuality and rationality of meanings in an interpenetrating image.

Third, we believe that Vygotsky's theory of concept formation (Vygotsky, 1987) might be an important aspect of our theoretical background. A child explores the world by means of the basic categories, such as time, space, quantity, quality, objective law, etc. As a result of categorization and generalization which is developed through social interaction of the child, an object is referred to a group or a class of objects with the same properties, qualities and worth. Connection between the sensual and the categorical induces the child to understand one's place and role in the world, meaning of life, nature and society. This is exactly what Vygotsky meant by transition from every day to scientific concepts. World-outlook enables a person to model a unique image of the world (mythopoetic, philosophical, religious, scientific, etc.) in his/her mind. The dominating world-view in person's consciousness develops as a result of certain type of world-outlook. Thus, it is possible to speak about mythopoetic world-image and mythological world-outlook, scientific world-image and scientific world-outlook, etc. In fact, the process of concept formation should not be separated from wider context and content of changes of child's image of the world; on the other hand, the development of world outlook is hardly possible without concept formation; these two processes go together.

As our research shows, at preschool age, a child possesses spontaneously developed mythopoetic world-image which is represented by various, frequently fantastic, interrelations between a human and the world. The understanding of the world around of a child till the age of 4 is based on conformity of dialectics of the logic of a myth and a discovery (Golosovker, 1987). The logic of a myth is in a way objective and ontological. Meanwhile, mythological thinking is a creative, cognitive activity having its reason and logic. Logical structure of perception of the reality in contemporary society differs from logical structure of ancient people, but it does not mean that thinking in antiquity was primitive, illogical or mystical; it just followed the rules of another kind of logic. This kind of logic is capable to solve the problems facing humans not worse than contemporary scientific thinking can do, but at the level of understanding the nature of phenomena, exposed to the logic analysis. Similarity between dialectics of a myth and logic of a discovery is also revealed in the fact that in many national fairy tales the idea of duality of object properties can be traced and plots of fairy tales are not composed in conformity with the scheme of combination, but are rather directly aimed at illustrating this strategy.

Let us take a look at natural philosophical world-image of a child aged 5. Its development in consciousness is possible owing to high development of all mental processes, in particular, thinking and imagination. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of imagination in expansion and enrichment of experience of a child for development of one's creative activity. The main line of imagination development at preschool age consists in its gradual transformation into means of embodiment of certain intentions (I come up with a fairy tale, a piece of music, I invent my future activity, etc.) (Vygotsky, 2004). Vygotsky defined imagination to be the vital function of consciousness, considering four basic forms of connection between imagination and reality. The first connection presupposes that imagined images are created from the real elements contained in the former experience of a person (mermaids, a cat-scientist from Pushkin's fairy-tales, etc.). The second one means that a ready product of imagination is associated with any complex phenomenon of reality (a child imagines the desert as waterless, lifeless space, something similar to what he heard about that was called "the dark kingdom" from fairy tales). In this form an expansion of child's experience takes place, as he/she gets an opportunity to imagine something that he/she hasn't seen, to imagine something that does not exist in his/her personal experience, thus, fuller and multivariate picture of the real world is shaped. The third form of connection between imagination and reality is presented by emotional saturation of images.

According to Vygotsky, images of imagination provide inner language for real feelings. Proceeding from this idea, the concept of general emotional sign was developed. This concept assumes that impressions or images which have common emotional sign, i.e. make similar emotional influence on a person, tend to be united in spite of the fact that no direct connection between images exists (blue color is perceived as cold, smell of a tulip - as sweet). The fourth form of

connection between the reality and imagination refers to the fact that imagined structure can represent something essentially new, something that did not exist in child's experience and mismatches any really existing subject (any technical invention). Owing to research by Vygotsky, it was found out that a child distinguishes between imagination, fiction and reality quite well (while playing, kids often say "in pretense"). However, living through and experiencing imagined, fantastic, pretended images allow enriching the world-view, formed in consciousness of a child. It is the knowledge of national, magic fairy tales that shapes ideas about the general connections existing in the world that a child will later come to realize at school when the scientific world-image is evolved.

So, to summarize this we have to say that the cultural-historical theory of development of higher mental functions introduced by Vygotsky and developed within his scientific school provides us with very powerful analytical tools which might be of a great help in research of development of child's world outlook.

We strongly believe that our research brings certain questions which might be considered as a kind of enrichment of Vygotsky's theory. One of the provisions of the theory of personal world-outlook evolution is the following: "development of a complete world outlook of a child begins in preschool childhood, in case pedagogical process is arranged in the context of culture. Certain features of a complete world-view are predetermined by personal experience, age peculiarities, conditions of upbringing, teaching and development, ways of getting knowledge about the world" (Kulikovskaya, 2013a). Organization of pedagogical process in the context of culture assumes reference to subculture of a child, in particular, to game as the space of children's development.

According to Vygotsky's theory, game is a source of development and it promotes development of verbal thinking (Vygotsky, 1967; Vygotsky, 1998). He defines it as the main "pathway" of cultural development of a child, first of all, its symbolic activity, considering game as a new kind of behavior. The key point is that action in an imaginary situation releases the child from situational coherence, and a kid learns not only from direct perception of a thing or situation having direct influence, but also from the meaning of this situation (Vygotsky, 1967). We believe that game becomes means of world-outlook development closely connected with development of imagination and fantasy, since a game is the sovereign world of childhood constructed by the triad "freedom – personality – creativity" (Berdyayev, 1910/2014). Only the personality who is free from thinking stereotypes can create one's own life under the laws of Beauty revealed in the history of mankind by philosophy, natural sciences and art.

Freely moving in space, a child gets to know the world, his/her judgments and conclusion are formed accordingly. Cultural-historical theory makes it possible to find the answer to the question about mechanisms of building a complete world-view in consciousness of a child by means of integrating a word and a movement. Vygotsky associated the mechanism of cultural development with acquiring cultural signs and symbolic (language) forms by a child. As a result of internalization, the primary structure of mental functions, mediated by signs and symbols, becomes a cultural function. A language sign or a word becomes a dual-purpose tool that changes mental functions of a person. Culture begins where symbolic tradition of getting knowledge about the world stretches in the unity of words, movements and result.

Knowledge of the world unity based on the unity of symbolic content of the word and movement will allow a child to harmonize inner state, to realize the importance of body movements which reflect emotional world, attitude to the world and other people. A word addressed to a person and causing a response can provoke various emotional conditions - from bitter depression to blissful happiness. Depending on the changed inner state, a man takes a certain pose or does some body movement – from shrugging shoulders and frowning as though wishing to drive off unpleasant ideas, to throwing oneself into arms of the person who has brought a happy message, physically approaching him. The opposite trend is also true: change of a pose or a gesture allows changing both an emotional condition and a direction of current ideas. From our point of view, when a child is aware of close connection between a word and a movement it is one of the most significant factors of developing the complete world-view.

At preteen age period scientific world-image, which is characterized by concrete nature and accuracy of definitions, begins to be formed. The main component of scientific world-image is search for understanding, revealing internal laws of some complex and vague aspects of reality. As for its main distinctive feature, one should mention construction of objective, exact, generalized formulas, models whose explanation must be subjected to experimental check. Scientific outlook gives a child an opportunity to realize the responsibility for the world around, to harmonize relations with nature and society, to understand that achievements of civilization can have both positive and negative impact by keeping or destroying life space of mankind.

The general law of cultural development of the higher mental functions, as it is formulated in the cultural-historical theory, says that every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an inter-mental category, then within the child as an intra-mental category. Genetically, social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher functions and their relations (Vygotsky, 1997b: 106).

This law is applicable to the development of the human world-outlook evolution. Furthermore, it reveals connection between phylogeny and ontogenesis, confirming the principle of unity of the whole (phylogeny) with its parts (individual and ontogenesis), the dialectics of the general and the separate. Without knowledge about the laws of phylogeny development or evolutionary development of the person it is impossible to comprehend deeply the law of individual development of the child, or ontogenesis. In the similar way, without deep and all-round knowledge about ontogenesis one cannot gain deep and all-round knowledge of laws of human world-outlook evolution.

The principle of the unity of phylogeny and ontogenesis as the leading one in personality development is stated in researches by M.S. Kagan (Kagan, 1997), E. Claparède (Claparède, 1905), V.V. Savchuk (Savchuk, 1995) and G. Hall (Hall, 1911). G. Hall's researches prove that development of each child reproduces the history of mankind. Early days of history and early stage of personal development of a child are both marked by the time when basic principles, values and senses of culture are formed (Hall, 1911). E. Claparède did not accept interpretation of the biogenetic law by G. Hall. He saw the similarity between phylogeny and ontogenetic development of mentality as being based on the idea that there exists general logic of development of mentality in phylogeny and ontogenesis which defines similarity of these processes but not their identity; therefore, there is no fatal predetermination in development of the child. External factors, such as training and education can accelerate its course and even partially change direction (Claparède, 1905). V.V. Savchuk specifies conformity between children and archaic world-outlook (Savchuk, 1995). Children and people of archaic communities, in his opinion, possess highly developed sense of smell and keen ear. They organically and instantly perceive the information coming through verbal and nonverbal channels which gives them a complete world-view and, accordingly, an opportunity to develop in various directions. Primary spontaneous experience of cognizing integrity of the world, the first experience of cultural efforts is irreversible and its results become the background for personal consciousness, the invaluable particles which make up the basis of spiritual life and go into infinite depths of sub-consciousness, setting archetypes and culture rows, defining the backbone of coevolution of society and nature. Values as spiritual phenomena form axiological sphere that influences the ways representatives of different cultures enter a dialogue, have impact on quality and emotional intensity of the dialogue, on the result which will be reached in the dialogue - tolerance in attitudes, certain prospects of future interaction, new horizons of knowledge about true senses of Love, the Good, the Truth, Beauty, Happiness, Pleasure (Kulikovskaya, 2013b)

The concepts "world-outlook" and "world-image" which can be referred to as a result of world-outlook are joined in a wider concept "world-view". World-view is a wider notion in comparison with the concept "world-outlook". It can be defined as synthesis of reason and feelings which results in constructive attitude to the world (Heidegger, 1993) and as the special organization of consciousness which functions as a spiritually-practical tool that organizes and reorganizes the whole world order, definition of the purposes and sense of human existence (Shinkaruk, 1988: 80), expanded and profound consciousness (Jung, 1990). World-view summarizes experience of the rational and spiritual, of sensually practical cognition of the world, ways of getting knowledge about the world being formed in their integrity.

Thus, there are enough reasons to consider that in educational settings the evolution of world-outlook occurs according to the general law of development of the higher mental functions, introduced and developed in the cultural-historical theory by Lev S. Vygotsky. It enables to find new ways of solving the problems of pedagogical support of children's world-view development and to define ways and laws of human world-outlook evolution. Besides, studies of development of the world-view enrich theoretical framework of cultural psychology.

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