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On Vygotsky's and Luria's "Cultural-Historical Theory of Psychology"

Vygotsky and Luria's "cultural-historical theory of psychology" is little known to broad circles of the Soviet public. Nor is this theory yet very familiar in the world of pedagogy, since the leaders in this area of psychology do not yet have a completed system of views. The "cultural-historical theory of psychology" is just in the process of being formed, but even so has managed to do much damage to psychology's theoretical front, deftly concealing its pseudoscientific aspects alien to Marxism with quotations from the works of the founders of Marxism. This theory is being aggressively introduced into pedagogical practice in higher education; its authors are forcefully publicizing it in the pages of journals and books, textbooks, and encyclopedias; and it makes claims to being the closest to Marxism of all the psychological currents existing in the USSR.

In this article we shall examine the methodological positions of the leaders of this current and their psychological and pedagogical views.

I

Let us begin with Luria. We shall disregard his early works on psychoanalysis, in which he attempts to supplant Marxism with Freudianism,¹ but rather turn to his later works, from the period of his mature scientific endeavors at the Institute of Psychology. We shall see how Luria understands Marxism. We shall find that he has an extremely peculiar view of it. Luria writes: "The Marxist system may be called a system of scientific analytic methodology,"² and the dialectic method "is its pragmatic perspective."³

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Thus we learn from these short quotations how Luria understood Marxism in 1925. For him dialectical materialism is pragmatism, and Marxism is a “system of scientific analytic methodology.”

We find in the same article the following passage: the fact that “psychoanalysis does not yet provide answers to questions about the essence of mental phenomena once again underscores its dialectic, or, we should say, pragmatic viewpoint.”⁴

As we see, Luria identified the dialectic “perspective” with a psychoanalytic perspective, on the one hand, and with pragmatism on the other. Moreover, in identifying the dialectic “viewpoint” with the psychoanalytic and pragmatic viewpoint, he ascribed to Marxism agnosticism concerning the question of the mind.

Moving on now to the problems of psychology, let us begin with the conception of psychology as a science and see how Vygotsky and Luria define psychology at various stages of their activity.

If we consider their earlier works, we find that Vygotsky and Luria have a great deal that is invalid and eclectic in their definitions of psychology as a science. In 1925 in the book [*Psychology and Marxism*], Luria claims that the structure of a future scientific psychology will be a union among reactology, reflexology, and Freudianism. He writes as follows:

Psychoanalysis, by shifting the theory of mental phenomena to a completely different level of study of the organic processes taking place in the integral human organism, breaks radically with the metaphysics and idealism of the old psychology and lays a solid foundation (together with the theory of human reactions and reflexes) for a psychology of materialist monism, which positively relates to the mind of the integral personality. (P. 79)

Thus Luria declares psychoanalysis to be a materialist and dialectic theory.

In 1926, in the book [*Problems of contemporary psychology*], Vygotsky, proceeding from distinctly reflexological positions, proposes that reflexology and psychology be merged and, moreover, even claims that one can say that this merger “is taking place before our very eyes” ([*Problems of contemporary psychology*]. GIZ, 1926. P. 42).

Further, proceeding from these reflexological positions and construing psychology as a science studying human behavior, he says that human behavior consists of a continual restoration and breaking of equilibrium between the human organism and the environment.

Vygotsky repeats this idea in [*Pedology of school age*], explaining that, in cases in which the organism predominates over the environment, we observe in a human being positive emotions: joy, satisfaction, pride, triumph, etc.; and in cases in which the environment predominates over the organism, we have negative emotions: fear, grief, sadness, etc.

It is true that in the [*Pedology of school age*] and, later, more thoroughly, in the [*Studies*] and in the [*Pedology of the adolescent*], Vygotsky makes the point that it is necessary to study human psychology and behavior in their development.

There is nothing so terrible about these references to the necessity of studying the development of the mind and behavior if only this study takes place on the rails of dialectical materialism. What is more, if such a study of psychology were formulated in an appropriate way, this would be a considerable contribution not only to psychology but also to the development of the theory of materialist dialectics.

Unfortunately, Vygotsky and Luria, though discussing the historical development of the human mind and human behavior, have not heeded Lenin's instructions, and naturally not only were unable to reproduce and resolve correctly the processes of mental development but were not even able to approach them correctly. The historicism we find in Vygotsky's and Luria's "cultural-historical theory" is a bourgeois historicism that disregards the aspects of the development of productive forces and the relations of production, the labor processes, and class struggle.

In their writings Vygotsky and Luria discuss the psychological type of a cultural European, but they present this type abstractly, in the spirit of idealist, bourgeois, cultural-historical schools.

But these are not the only errors of the representatives of the "cultural-historical theory of psychology." The invalidity of their methodological positions, which lead them to idealist mistakes and to reactionary conclusions hostile to Marxism, is also to be found in the fact that they did not understand the need to study all mental functions in the light of the Marxist-Leninist theory of reflection. They have almost wholly discarded (or "forgotten") the problem of sensations and perceptions and go straight to interpreting and exploring ideas, concepts, and thought in general. They have not understood the dialectic interaction and connection among sensations, ideas, and concepts in the process of human cognition, and have not understood that sensations are the point of linkage between the external, objective, material world and our consciousness, that there is nothing in ideas, concepts, and thought that does not exist prior to them, in some way or another, in sensations.

Now let us consider the problem of human consciousness and thought. We can here demonstrate most thoroughly the mistakes, eclecticism, and reactionary core of the "cultural-historical theory of psychology." Let us first look at Vygotsky's works.

Vygotsky has long been involved in studying the problems of consciousness and thought. He is one of the first from the reactological camp to devote an article (in 1925) to this question: ["Consciousness as a problem of psychology"].⁵

Much has been written in the classics of Marxism about the problem of the individual and social consciousness. The series of brilliant pages devoted to this question by Marx, Engels, and Lenin should, it would seem, be enough to show in what direction this work should be pursued. The classics of Marxism defined the mind and consciousness as a special property of matter organized in a specific way—the brain, as the property to reflect the objective, material world—nature, and social development, and struggled against the idealism and vulgar, mechanistic materialism of the 18th and 19th centuries, speaking about the herd conscious-

ness of animals and the individual and social consciousness of human beings. But, while discussing the differences between animal consciousness and human consciousness, they said nothing about their being absolute.

On consciousness in animals, Engels writes, in the *Dialectics of nature*, as follows: "In animals, the capacity for conscious, planned actions develops in parallel with the development of the cerebral system and reaches a high degree of development in mammals."⁶

In *The German ideology*, Marx and Engels, discussing herd consciousness and individual human consciousness, write: "*Man is distinguished from sheep only in the fact that for him his consciousness replaces instinct, or rather that in man instinct has a conscious character.*"⁷

As for animals, Marx and Engels say that they have only herd, animal consciousness, a consciousness ruled by nature. This consciousness, which does not lead to changing the world, but to adapting the animals to the blind, elemental forces of nature, is a consciousness that "develops in parallel with the development of a cerebral system."

Human consciousness is of another nature. Man is a product of social relations; and his consciousness, evolving from the forms of "purely animal consciousness," rises, subordinating the blind elemental forces of nature to human consciousness, and in socioeconomic class formations is a consciousness that reflects the interests of its class, a consciousness that forms under the influence of the ideology of its class.

Of course, there is no doubt that an ideology, being created by a class as a whole, at the same time is created by individual representatives of that class, and that a unity is preserved by individual and social consciousness, though, at the same time, there are also features of difference.

In contrast to the forms of individual consciousness, the founders of Marxism say that ideologies are forms of social consciousness, forms of intellectual production, an aspect of the historical process, and superstructures; and they stress the decisive significance of class ideology in the formation of individual consciousness. Marx and Engels wrote the following about this point:

Discrete individuals form a class only insofar as they must conduct a common struggle against some other class. . . . On the other hand, a class is objectified, and in turn becomes something independent with respect to individuals, so that individuals find that the conditions of their lives are preestablished: the class shows them the position they occupy in everyday life, and at the same time their personal development; the class subordinates these to itself.⁸

It would seem that in analyzing the forms of individual consciousness, one would have to proceed from class positions (in socioeconomic class formations) and from an analysis of the forms of social consciousness and from class ideology. But Vygotsky, in analyzing individual consciousness, proceeds not from social, class consciousness, but from the consciousness of some vague, foggy collective, and in this does not go beyond the neopositivist sociologists, such as Durkheim, or

the positions of Lévy-Bruhl, and essentially repeats Bogdanov's stale theory about "collectively organized experience."⁹

As we know, Durkheim says that "To think rationally means to think in accordance with laws that are universally accepted for all rational creatures"; that "A collective representation contains a sufficient guarantee of objectivity precisely because it is collective";¹⁰ that the category of causality, for example, has as a prototype the collective force of society, the category of space originates in the space occupied by a tribe or some other group, the category of time is matched by the rhythm of life together, and the category of wholeness is the abstract form of the concept of society. He also says that "acting morally means to act in accordance with rules that may without contradiction be extended to include the totality of wills," etc.

What does Vygotsky say when he analyzes the forms of thought in their ontogenetic development? Indeed, almost the same as he says in many passages in his works, namely, that

Observation of the development of higher psychological functions shows that the construction of each of them is rigorously governed by one and the same law, that each higher psychological function appears on the stage twice in the process of development of behavior: first as a function of collective behavior, as a form of cooperation and interaction, as a means of social adaptation, i.e., as an interpsychological category, and then, second, as a mode of the child's individual behavior, as a means of personal adaptation, as an internal process of behavior, i.e., as an intrapsychological category.

Vygotsky echoes Durkheim when he says, "Everywhere, the development of the child's personality displays itself as a function of the development of the child's collective behavior; everywhere the same law is observed, namely, the transference of social forms of behavior to the realm of individual adaptation."

Vygotsky operates with the foggy concept of the collective in almost all of his books on pedology, and thus does not go beyond the development of the sociological thought of the neopositivists.

Wherever, in our view, he should be speaking of a child's class environment, his production environment, of the influence of school, his Pioneer group, and the Komsomol movement as the conveyors of the influence of the Party and the proletariat on children, or that the categories of thought reflect and sum up the practice of social production, that they are the stages in our coming to know the world, Vygotsky instead speaks simply about the influence of the collective, neglecting to tell us what collective he is speaking about, or what he means by collective.

We have analyzed how Vygotsky conceives the problem of consciousness and thought as a function of the collective. Let us now see how he understands the question of the dependence of consciousness on cerebral activity and how, in this regard, he understands and defines the mind, consciousness, and thought.

Let us analyze his views in their historical sequence. In the first years of his scientific activity, Vygotsky took crudely mechanistic positions on this question,

interpreting and translating the positions of Marxism into the language of reflexologists and behaviorists, and so distorted Marxism. Thus, in his article ["Consciousness as a problem of psychology"],¹¹ he in one passage proposes that the facts of consciousness be materialized;¹² and in another passage, he writes: "The unconscious, the mind, are indeed mental reflexes transferred to other systems . . . consciousness is reduced wholly and without a trace to the conveyor mechanisms of reflexes working in accordance with general laws, i.e., one may assume that the only processes going on in the organism are reactions."¹³ He finishes the article by saying that consciousness is a reflex of reflexes. He also writes: "Consciousness is only a reflex of reflex."¹⁴ According to Vygotsky, human consciousness is not a reflection of social experience, but a reflex reflecting its own reflexes.

That is what he wrote in 1925. But perhaps Vygotsky changed his views later? Let us proceed further. Let us consider 1926 and his article in the second volume of the book [*Problems of contemporary psychology*]. What do we read there? The mechanistic mistakes of 1925 are aggravated even further. In many passages Vygotsky literally copies passages from his previous article (see ["Problems of contemporary psychology"], pp. 26, 31, 36, etc.) and repeats his famous formula: "Consciousness is only a reflex of reflexes."¹⁵ But this is not enough for him. Bekhterev and Pavlov seem to him to be insufficiently consistent reflexologists, and he wants to be a "greater reflexologist than Pavlov himself," "more papist than the Pope." He writes: "In claiming that consciousness, too, should be understood as a reaction of the body to its own reactions, one must be a greater reflexologist than Pavlov. So be it. If you want to be consistent, you must sometimes object to any half-heartedness and be more papist than the Pope, more royalist than the King. Kings are not always good royalists."¹⁶

In a book [*The pedology of psychology*] that was published in the same year, Vygotsky discusses the identity between the psychological and the corporeal,¹⁷ the identity between the nervous system and the mind,¹⁸ and that "the mind should be seen as a specially complex form of behavior, etc."

Later, in 1928, when Vygotsky wrote his [*Pedology of school age*], he again expressed himself as a reflexologist, reducing thought and memory to conditioned reflexes (see [*Pedology of school age*], assignment no. 5–6, pp. 11–12; assignment no. 4, pp. 44, 54); and it is only in 1929 that we see some changes in this issue, but again not in the direction of Marxism. In the first issue of the journal *Estestvoznaniye i Marksizm* in 1929, Vygotsky wrote an article entitled ["The genetic roots of thinking and speech"] in which he says:

As we know, the question of the necessity of discriminating a special class of intellectual reactions is not yet definitively resolved. We shall leave it aside and conduct our investigations without prejudging the question of whether an intellectual reaction (thought) is simply a structurally, functionally, and genetically special case of the formation of habits, conditioned reflexes, or whether it consists of special kinds of processes that are built onto a system of habits as a new stage of behavior.¹⁹

But if the question of what is thought is not resolved, one can use any existing definition. That is essentially what Vygotsky does when, in his [*Studies*] and in [*The pedology of the adolescent*], he agrees with the Swiss scholar Piaget²⁰ on the question of the egocentricity of a child's thought;²¹ with Wagner on the question of the different genetic roots of thought and language; with Lévy-Bruhl on the question of thinking in complex thought;²² with the German Gestaltist psychologists on the question of conception formation;²³ with the studies by Jansch and his school²⁴ on the question of eidetic thought and memory in children and primitive peoples; and with Durkheim on the question of the influence of the collective on the individual in the formation of thought;²⁵ etc. Vygotsky does not reveal that the egocentrism of a child's thought in Piaget's study is due wholly to the social situation in Switzerland in which the children were investigated; he does not understand, or does not want to understand, that one cannot look for the forms thinking in complex thought such as Lévy-Bruhl found in primitive peoples in modern Uzbeks, just as he did not understand that one must be very careful about the conclusions of Jaensch's school on eidetic thought and eidetic memory in primitive peoples. He does not show the idealist mistakes of the Gestaltists in concept formation; does not reveal the fact that sensations, ideas, and concepts reflect the objective world; that an idea is a specialized form of generalized sensations; that it is a combination of individual features, aspects, and properties of an object at one time directly perceived by the sense organs; that an idea is a transition, a connection, a movement of cognition from sensation to thought, that it is a process of transformation of the former into the latter—a leap from the movement of sensations to the movement of concepts. Vygotsky inadequately perceives that a concept is a product of sensations and ideas and a generalization of those sensations and ideas, and that concepts are not only abstract but also concrete, not only universal but also singular, that they more deeply and more truly reveal and reflect processes in the objective material world if they are just correct. Vygotsky does not understand the role of practice in this question.

Instead of exploring the processes of overcoming forms of egocentric thought in children under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism, Vygotsky and Luria, in their [*Studies*], derive this egocentrism not from the child's class environment, but from his biological nature. Instead of showing the process of development and cultural growth of Uzbekistan workers, they seek facts in support of their "cultural-psychological theory" and "find" identical forms of thought in an adult Uzbek and in a five-year-old child and, under the banner of science, drag in ideas that are harmful for the work of building a national culture in Uzbekistan.²⁶

They say that the development of the forms of thought proceeds along the same path ontogenetically as it does in the course of the history of society: first syncretic, then complex, and then conceptual thought. When the personality disintegrates, the reverse process takes place. For them, syncretic, complex, and conceptual forms of thought remain forms without content throughout the whole of develop-

ment. Not only do they not provide a dialectic resolution of the question of the form and content of thought: they do not even pose the problem.

Vygotsky and Luria are very boastful about exploring the problem of thought in its development—in its historical aspect. But they very often understand the process of thought as an immanent internal process of development of the individual, independent of class relations.

Vygotsky's report entitled ["On the methodological foundations of psychological study of culturally unique peoples"], which he gave at the AKV [Academy of Communist Education], essentially was aimed at demonstrating the presence of primitive thought in all previously oppressed nationalities; and Luria says, "Metaphors, complex logical turns of speech, etc., cannot be understood by national [i.e., ethnic] audiences."

Instead of showing the process of "overcoming the vestiges of capitalism in the economy and the consciousness of the workers of Uzbekistan, and showing how, on the basis of the Party's general line and Lenin's national policy and under conditions of a lively economic and cultural boom in Uzbekistan, people are developing a new attitude toward work, the new man is being created and a communist consciousness is taking shape—instead of this, Luria attempts, on the basis of "scientific and experimental" material from his expedition to Uzbekistan, to show that the collective farm workers of Uzbekistan think not in concepts, but complexly, that they are unable to abstract from a concrete situation and are incapable of generalizations.

The workers in Luria's expedition and Luria himself assessed examples of a highly developed political consciousness among collective farm workers in Uzbekistan as examples of situational thinking, as an inability to go beyond narrow practice and move on to theoretical generalizations.

Let us give a few examples of how Luria and his fellow workers confused the collective farm workers with their pseudoscientific method and looked for situational thinking among them. One of the subjects—an illiterate collective farm chairman—was given a text of the following content:

Question: A rich landowner got the idea to cultivate cattle, and the cattle began to appear like flies.

The subject answers: How is that possible that the cattle were like flies? He is a rich landowner, so his cattle are always as big as elephants.

Experimenter: Assume that his cattle became like flies.

Answer: We are moving toward socialism. The Soviet authorities took from the landowner all of his possessions and all of his cattle and did not leave even a fly, i.e., cattle that were no bigger than a fly. The landowner's cattle cannot grow thin; if he only had cattle like flies, that would mean that the landowner had been dispossessed.

The experimenter, one of Luria's collaborators, concluded: "It was impossible to persuade the subject." Luria adds: "Concrete situational thinking. Refusal to

make assumptions.” In other words, the subject was at a lower level of thought; he thought primitively, and abstractions were not accessible to him.

Let us take another example. The subject, who was a guard at a cooperative, an old man of 67 years, was given the question: “Would you like to go to Moscow with us?”

Answer: I’m an old man. Why should I want to go to Moscow?

Experimenter: If you were young, would you go to Moscow? What would you do there?

Answer: I would go if I were young. I would do in Moscow what the state ordered me to. If they order me to be a peasant, I will be a peasant. (An observer present at this experiment says: You would have a lot of money. Reply: Still I would become a peasant.)

Question: And if you were appointed as a teacher, what would you do?

Answer: Why would they make me a teacher? To be a teacher a person has got to be literate, and I’m totally illiterate.

Experimenter: But imagine that you were literate and they made you a teacher.

Answer: If I had knowledge, I would do what came my way.

Experimenter: And what would you do?

Answer: If I would be a big teacher, I would join you.

Experimenter: But what would you do?

Answer: Put aside those things that one can’t even think about.

Question: When you want something, do you think about it?

Answer: I’ve had some dreams. Once I wanted to go to Samarkand, and another time, to Moscow. When a person is dreaming deeply, he does not even remember himself. The last time I thought that I should not sleep deeply at night; otherwise they would pilfer the cooperative. Look how difficult it is to be a guard.

On the basis of this conversation, the experimenter concludes: “Transfer of a real situation to the future. A turn to the past in thinking about the future. Resorts to jokes, shifts everything into a situation he knows from experience.” Thus this old man is again a representative of “primitive situational thought.”

There are dozens of such protocols in Luria’s expedition—dozens of protocols in which the experimenters literally tormented the respondents with their situational thinking; and when they did not find it, despite all their clever tricks, they drew conclusions such as the ones presented above.

Of course, there was no scientific experiment or scientific work whatsoever in Luria’s expedition. No matter how much Luria and his comrades in arms have sworn that they were studying the problem of thought of collective farm workers in the ethnic regions in its historical development, this does not at all help them to conceal or disguise their reactionary theory, so hostile to Marxism. This

pseudoscientific, reactionary, anti-Marxist and anticlass theory, in practice leads to the anti-Soviet conclusion that policy-makers in the Soviet Union are people and classes that think primitively and are incapable of any kind of abstract thinking, which, of course, does not at all fit the facts.²⁷

II

Let us now look at what Vygotsky has to say about pedagogy.

The same stages we found for the development of his methodological and psychological views, and the same eclecticism, are characteristic of his system of views on pedagogy.

Thus, in his pedagogical psychology, the reflexological approach to the problems of education fits in well with an idealist explanation of morals, and both fit in well with the theory of the demise of the school and the teacher.

Let us begin with the elements of mechanicism; let us dwell on Vygotsky's reflexological errors and see how he examines the educational process from the perspective of reflexology. In one passage Vygotsky writes: "The educational process essentially boils down to establishing and accumulating conditioned responses on the basis of innate ones and to the elaboration of forms of behavior useful for adapting to the social environment."²⁸ In another passage he says: "It is very important to show with thorough scientific precision that education, no matter what it is about and no matter what forms it takes, always, in the final analysis, has the mechanism of the formation of conditioned reflexes at its basis."²⁹

There is, of course, no doubt that we have the establishment and accumulation of conditioned responses and conditioned reflexes in the educational process. But to reduce the whole educational process to conditioned reflexes and reactions is an oversimplification and a repetition of the vulgar-mechanistic mistakes made concerning this question by American behaviorists and our Russian reflexologists (Dernova-Iarmolenko, Frolov, Ariamov, etc.), which have already been exposed and criticized in our press.

In his [*Pedagogical psychology*] Vygotsky arrives at the following propositions: "Pedagogical psychology can be oriented like any system of education. It can show how to cultivate a slave or how to cultivate a free man or, equally, how to cultivate a careerist and how to cultivate a revolutionary."³⁰

But evidently deciding that he did not state clearly enough the supraclass nature of his "pedagogical psychology," Vygotsky in another passage adds: "The psychological nature of the education process is completely the same whether we want to cultivate a fascist or a proletarian, whether we are training an acrobat or a good bureaucrat. What should interest us is solely the mechanism by which new reactions are established, no matter to what good these reactions lead."³¹

Thus, Vygotsky is not interested in the good reactions do. For him the psychological nature of the educational process is the same whether a fascist or a proletarian is being cultivated. While underscoring the political harm done by such arguments,

we at the same time should say that from the standpoint of the science of psychology, this is at total variance with reality and with the findings of psychology.

But let us accompany Vygotsky further and see how he understands and interprets the question of the purposes of education. In Vygotsky's view, the purpose of education under the dictatorship of the proletariat is established not by the Party and not by the working class, but by "social ethics." What this "social ethics" is remains Vygotsky's secret, for he does not explain the content of these words. But however much Vygotsky cloaks himself in these vague words, one thing remains completely clear to us: he minimizes the importance of our Party in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the business of educating a new generation. He does not understand the tasks of class education or the laws of development of human society, and hence thinks that, in our time, the "fundamental questions of education" cannot be resolved. He writes about this as follows:

The questions of education will be truly resolved only when the question of the social system is truly resolved. Any attempt to fashion an ideal education in a socially contradictory society is utopian because, as we see, the social environment is the only educational factor establishing new reactions in the child; and so long as that environment contains unresolved contradictions, those contradictions will produce cracks in even the very best designed and best implemented education.³²

Everything in this passage from Vygotsky, from the very beginning to the end, is wrong. It is wrong that Vygotsky considers it possible to resolve the questions of education, for this would mean halting social development. His point that all contradictions should disappear in a future social system is also wrong. Antagonisms will disappear, but contradictions remain. The classics of Marxism write about this, but Vygotsky does not understand it, and apparently not only does not understand but does not know, or distorts, it.

However, the invalidity of Vygotsky's approach to the problems of education is manifested elsewhere as well. The fact that he tries to provide a psychological foundation for his theory of the demise of the school in the future is also wrong and politically harmful.

He writes as follows:

In the city of the future probably there will not be one building called a school, because *school*, in the strict sense of the word, means "leisure." But the school, which produced special people in a special building for "leisure" occupations, will become wholly a part of labor and life and will take place in the factories, on the squares, in the museums and the hospitals, and in the cemeteries.³³

And, once everything is in the public squares, in the museums, in the hospitals, and in the cemeteries, then, of course, there will be no need for instruction. Vygotsky even wrote about this: "As strange as it may sound, teaching as a profession is, from a psychological perspective, a false fact. It will undoubtedly disappear in the near future."³⁴

Thus, what we have here is an anti-Leninist theory of the demise of the school and the teacher, already familiar to us and condemned by the decisions of the Central Committee of the Party and the government, which this time Vygotsky offers us with a psychological sauce.

But that was earlier. Let us look how things now stand with the “left-wing” theories of the demise of the school in Vygotsky’s writings in his later years, specifically in his textbooks on pedology, which students in educational colleges are now using.

Essentially, Vygotsky never extricated himself from his “left-wing” mistakes later on. Thus, in the [*Pedology of school age*] (assignment 8, p. 17), he postulates the necessity of real-life tasks in mathematics, on the basis of his “cultural-psychological theory,” and says: “The project method is also essentially a method in which problems are systematically laid out before the pupil. . . . The comprehensive curriculum, which uses the project method, also creates a number of such tasks.”

Quite a bit has been written about the project method and the comprehensive program in the decisions of the Central Committee about the school, and it seems to us there is no need to dwell on this in detail. The question is clear, as is also Vygotsky’s position on this question. Let us merely, for completeness’s sake, dwell a bit on the question of moral upbringing, and let us see how Vygotsky approaches this problem.

Following the precise and clear instructions from Engels in his dispute with Dühring (*Anti-Dühring*), and following Lenin’s statements on proletarian morals, in particular following his speech to the Third Congress of the Komsomol, it would seem that anyone who wants to be a Marxist should not err in his treatment of this question. But we who already know Vygotsky’s views on the question of the school and other questions should, of course, be on our guard since he is a person who interprets the postulates of the founders of Marxism in his own way. And . . . it turns out this is no idle matter. The whole of Vygotsky’s interpretation of the conception of morality and moral education is alien to Marxism.

In his early works, Vygotsky treats morals and moral upbringing idealistically. According to Vygotsky, morality is unconscious, and is based on an instinct for “the good and the beautiful.” He writes as follows: “Moral behavior should be based not on external prohibitions, but on internal restraint, or, more precisely, on that which naturally attracts man to the good and the beautiful.”³⁵ “He who does not notice that he is acting morally acts morally,”³⁶ etc.

But why in this question of morality is Vygotsky attracted to “the good and the beautiful”? Why does he like this “good and beautiful” so much? It turns out that it is because he supposes that “in this area, as well as in all others, the revolutionary epoch is unable to offer the complete systems of the moral that the preceding epochs could boast of.”³⁷ But then?

So far Vygotsky speaks of an “egocentric morality,” and invents “spontaneous moral attitudes in the child” and forms of autonomous moral consciousness, not knowing, or disregarding, that Marx and Engels castigated the idealist Stirner for these forms of autonomous moral consciousness in the child, adolescent, and youth.

In *The German ideology* Marx & Engels acidly ridicule Stirner when he at-

tempts to separate the development of the child, adolescent, and youth from their class and ethnic surroundings, calling Stirner's system of views on human ontogenetic development "pedantic narrowness." To demonstrate that Stirner is wrong in saying that a child is not formed as a result of the influence of his class and national environment (in class-based socioeconomic formations), Marx & Engels say that it is sufficient to look at children from different nationalities and classes. "To rise above this local and pedantic narrowness, he (Stirner) should only have compared 'his own' youth with that of any young office worker, a young English factory worker, and a young Yankee, not to mention a young Kirgiz."³⁸

Thus did Marx & Engels write in *The German ideology*; but Vygotsky, in the [*Pedology of adolescence*], speaks about a child's "spontaneous moral attitudes" and forms of autonomous and moral consciousness. He writes:

A child's spontaneous moral attitudes are a mixture of elementary social responses and egocentric responses. These attitudes still disregard all moral rules and all moral commitment. The child's bond with adults is the source of an awareness of obligations, but this primitive consciousness for a long time fails to destroy fully the egocentric attitudes. A child develops a certain transitional form of behavior, which Piaget calls "moral realism." Finally, the third and last proposition coincides wholly with the postulate of the relative development of logic and says: only cooperation leads to autonomous moral consciousness.³⁹

Let us stop here with Vygotsky's pedagogical statements. He is true to himself in his "own methodology."

III

We have examined the "cultural-historical theory of psychology" and dwelled on the errors and distortions of Marxism committed by its authors. But what are our conclusions? Undoubtedly that Vygotsky and Luria are objectively conduits for bourgeois influence on the proletariat. Not knowing Marxism, and not possessing the method of dialectical materialism, they are now constantly prey to these and other "fashionable" bourgeois psychological currents and distort and pervert the propositions of Marxism.

Marxist-Leninist psychology should struggle untiringly, uncompromisingly, and in a Bolshevik manner with their conceptions, recalling that "without a solid philosophical foundation, no natural sciences, and no materialism, can withstand the struggle against the incursions of bourgeois ideas and the restoration of the bourgeois view of the world. To withstand this struggle wholly successfully, a natural scientist must also be a consistent dialectical materialist" (Lenin).

Notes

1. Luria, [*Psychoanalysis in the light of the principal trends in contemporary psychology*]. Kazan, 1923.

2. See [*Psychology and Marxism*]. Giz., 1925. P. 47.
3. Ibid. P. 60.
4. See [*Psychology and Marxism*]. P. 60.
5. See [*Psychology and Marxism*] (edited by Kornilov). Giz., 1925.
6. Marx & Engels, [*Collected works*]. Vol. XIV, p. 460.
7. [*Archive Marx and Engels*]. Vol. 1, pp. 220–21.
8. Marx & Engels [*The German ideology*]. Partizdat, 1933. P. 44.
9. We may assume that Wagner had a major influence on Vygotsky in the formation of his cultural-historical theory; there are a number of statements anticipating Vygotsky long before he established his cultural-historical theory of psychology in Wagner, specifically in his *Studies in comparative psychology* and in *Psychological types and collective psychology*.
10. See [*New Ideas in Sociology*], No. 2, p. 53.
11. Luria very strongly recommends and praises this article in one of his articles.
12. See [*Psychology and Marxism*]. Giz., 1925. P. 181.
13. Ibid. Pp. 187–89.
14. See pp. 190–95.
15. Ibid. P. 198.
16. [*Problems of contemporary psychology*]. Giz., 1926. P. 42.
17. Ibid. P. 47.
18. Ibid. P. 55.
19. [*Pedagogical psychology*]. Rabpros, 1926. P. 54.
20. The [*Pedology of the adolescent*] and also the [*Studies*] by Vygotsky & Luria. Pp. 141, 152.
21. Wagner [*Studies in comparative psychology*] (Nachatki znanii publishers), No. 4, pp. 18, 19, 31, 41, 55, 59, 63.
22. [*Studies*]. Pp. 98–99.
23. [*Pedology of the adolescent*], 1931. P. 287.
24. [*Studies*]. Pp. 96–97, 99.
25. See above.
26. [*Studies in the history of behavior*]. Pp. 142 and 143, and figures 21, 24, and 25.
27. Vygotsky did not participate in Luria's expedition and had no direct relation to the work of that expedition.
28. Vygotsky, [*Pedagogical psychology*]. Rabpros, 1926. P. 65.
29. Ibid. P. 26.
30. Ibid. P. 19.
31. Ibid. P. 63.
32. Vygotsky, [*Pedagogical psychology*]. Rabpros, 1926. P. 240; on this point see also p. 215.
33. Vygotsky [*Pedagogical psychology*]. Rabpros, 1926. P. 240; on this point see also p. 182.
34. Ibid. P. 342.
35. Ibid. P. 238.
36. Ibid. P. 230.
37. Ibid. P. 227.
38. P. 108. Partizdat, 1933.
39. Pp. 467–69. Uchpedgiz, 1931.