

## “Cultural-Historical Theory” and “Cultural-Historical School”: From Myth (Back) to Reality\*

P. Keiler

The word is a philosophy of the fact; it can be its mythology and its scientific theory.

Lev S. Vygotsky

### Summary

Contrary to the common opinion, the label “cultural-historical theory [kul’turno-istoricheskaja teoriia]” is no authentic designation for the conceptions elaborated by L.S. Vygotsky together with A.R. Luria, A.N. Leontiev, and a number of collaborators more between 1927/28 and 1931/32. Likewise, the denomination “cultural-historical school [kul’turno-istoricheskaja shkola]” does not reflect the genuine self-concept of the respective researchers. Rather, both designations originally were introduced in the mid-30s by critics with defamatory aims and have been later accepted in consequence of a defense-mechanism, which by psychoanalysts is called “identification with the aggressor.” In the aftermath of the “thaw”-period, when the once “beaten” turned out to be the “victorious” ones, those labels became generally accepted (though in several respects quite problematic) shibboleths.

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### Introduction

#### a) General remarks

Being one of the co-founders of Critical Psychology, which took its rise in the context of the radical student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Federal Republic of Germany and West-Berlin, the author of the present paper has been engaged in the study of the commonly so called “cultural-historical” approach in Soviet psychology since the mid 1970s. In the beginning he was, like all of West-German psychologists with a Marxist (non Maoist) orientation at that time, deeply impressed by the German version of A.N. Leontiev’s book *Problems of the development of the psyche [Problemy razvitiia psikhiki]*, which in a licensed version and with a detailed foreword by Klaus Holzkamp and Volker Schurig was published in 1973 in the FRG (the original version being available in the GDR already since 1964)<sup>1</sup>. For about a decade, this book, appearing in several editions, was celebrated as a testimonial of “cultural-historical theory” in its hitherto best elaborated version (cf. Holzkamp & Schurig 1973, Keiler 1976, 1981), determining not only the public’s attitude towards L.S. Vygotsky but also the common use of the terminology conveyed by the book, which at that time was uncritically accepted as reliable and compulsory. In 1979, the

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<sup>1</sup> In 1964 also was published in the GDR the German translation of the 1956 version of L.S. Vygotsky’s *Myshlenie i rech’*, a licensed version then being published in the FRG already five years later but at that time not yet attracting the interest of many psychologists.

present author, animated by the lecture of the German version of E.A. Budilova's *Philosophical problems in Soviet Psychology [Filosofskie problemy v sovetskoj psikhologii]*, started to engage himself in the controversy between Leontiev and S.L. Rubinshtein, an enterprise that successively led him to a detachment from Leontiev's views, encouraging him to a more detailed study of the "cultural-historical" approach as such, especially in its historical connections, with a concentration on the materialist traditions in the history of psychology in the last two centuries.

Taking advance of the possibility to realize independent (not granted, not censored) research work on his own account, the author in the mid 1980s came to some surprising insights: for instance, that Leontiev not only in his orientation to the paradigm of "activity" [deiatel'nost', "Tätigkeit"] but also in the elaboration of his famous concept of "objectivisation-appropriation" [opredmechivanie-prisvoenie, "Vergegenständlichung-Aneignung"], had beyond doubt been influenced by Rubinshtein and his Marx-interpretation (inspired by the German tradition of theories about the "objective spirit"). This insight shed a new light not only on Rubinshtein's later attacks on Leontiev but also on the relation of both of them to L.S. Vygotsky, especially on Leontiev's role as the keeper of the "holy grail" and "perfectioner" of Vygotsky's approach. On the other hand, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the author became more and more fascinated by Vygotsky's affinity to the psychological aspects of the work of the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, which has left so many marks in Vygotsky's own writings, though not always recognizable as such at first glance.

The most important findings of this critical-historical research were published in a series of papers and two books, gaining the author the image of a „myth buster“ (cf. Keiler 1988a, 1988b, 1991, 1996, 1997/<sup>3</sup>1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2010a, 2010b). However, the respective research work would not have been possible without the remarkable change in the conditions of access to pertinent source material – a change, that began to show its face already in the 1980s: There was introduced new material, free accessible to the public, first only in Russian: 6 volumes *Sobranie sochinenii [Collected works]* of Vygotsky (1982-1984), and 2 volumes *Izbrannye psikhologicheskie proizvedeniia [Selected psychological works]* of Leontiev (1983); then also in German: 2 volumes of *Ausgewählte Schriften [Selected works]* of Vygotsky (cf. Wygotski 1985, 1987); and since the end of the 1980s also in English: 6 volumes of Vygotsky's *Collected works* (1987-1999), Vygotsky and Luria's *Studies in the history of behavior* (cf. Luria & Vygotsky 1992), a *Vygotsky Reader* (1994), Vygotsky's *Pedagogical psychology* (1997), and, last not least, a compilation of Vygotsky-critiques from the 1930s, edited by R. van der Veer (2000) – new material, that opened up broader perspectives of a qualified critical examination of "legends" and reception traditions, finding support in the analysis of the re-published (and in some cases first published) early work of Leontiev (cf. Leont'ev 2001, 2003, 2006).

This perspective has assumed a new quality with establishing the project of publishing the "Complete Collected Works of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky" in 15 volumes (cf. ISCAR NEWS 2008, Vol. 6, No.2, pp. 7 ff.) in order to replace the 6 volumes of *Sobranie sochinenii*, which, as well as the *Collected works*, since a couple of years have become the subject of severe criticism (cf. for instance van der Veer 1997a; van der Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011). In more or less close relation to this project, during the last six years there has been done a lot of archival and "textological" work, trying to restore what might be called the "authentic" legacy of Vygotsky (cf. Zavershneva 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Zavershneva & Osipov 2010; Yasnitsky 2010; Kellog 2011; Kellog & Yasnitsky 2011; Mecacci & Yasnitsky 2011; Yasnitsky 2011a, 2011b) – a pretentious enterprise in the context of which Vygotsky's aphorism about "the word" being "the philosophy of the fact" is gaining programmatic significance: how authentic, respectively "honest," is the commonly used terminology, what is the reality behind (or: covered by) the established shibboleths?

*b) Subject of the paper and applied method:*

In the present paper, the main accent is put on the question of the legitimacy of the commonly used labels "cultural-historical theory" and "cultural-historical school," emphasizing in

addition the concept of the “higher psychological functions” as the main topic of Vygotsky’s research program between 1927/28 and 1934 (the year of his decease). In the paragraphs 1 – 7, the method will be mainly empirical-historical. That is, based on the original literature (Russian and English texts from the 1920s and 1930s) and on the respective correspondence, it will be documented *who, when, at which occasion, and with what intentions*, called (denominated, designated) *what how* – completed by two interval paragraphs (2 and 4) presenting some general reflections and additional information about the contents of the conceptions sustained by Vygotsky as the (as it is generally accepted) *spiritus rector*<sup>2</sup> of the theoretical conceptions under investigation between 1928 and 1934, accentuating the period between 1928 and 1932, which commonly is associated with the idea of the genesis and development of *the* “cultural-historical theory” (cf. for instance as “trendsetters” van der Veer & Valsiner 1991). Paragraph 8 is dedicated to a résumé of the findings elaborated in paragraphs 1 – 7, and in addition gives a survey of the development of the discourse after the “rediscovery” of Vygotsky in the “thaw”-period of the late 1950s. In the last paragraph (9), there will be summed up all the findings of the foregoing paragraphs in a critical conclusion.

Because of the “sensibility of the matter” (Feuerbach) it was necessary to formulate a lot of annotations with comments, explications, and additional information, the real significance of which perhaps may be recognized only in reading the whole paper a second time.

The author is deeply indebted to René van der Veer and Anton Yasnitsky for providing him in copy a good quantity of the original historical sources (Russian texts) referred to and quoted from in the present paper, thus not only furthering this paper but also those that still are in preparation and will give a more detailed account of some topics that in the present paper only have been sketched. To mention their help in every single case separately, would have meant to put a considerable number of annotations more.

## **1. Development of the autochthonous<sup>3</sup> terminology until 1932**

The two earliest pertinent documents, free accessible to the public, date from 1929 as the year in which Vygotsky’s “instrumentalism,” inspired by Spinoza’s and Hegel’s high appreciation of the “tool”<sup>4</sup> and characteristic of the period from 1928 until 1930, already had found its full expression. Thus, in the context of his letter to A.N. Leontiev dated the 15<sup>th</sup> of April of 1929, Vygotsky first speaks of “our theory” (quoted after Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, 23), then gives the information that he wants to “convene a ‘conference’ in spring or summer of people working with the instrumental method” (ibid.)<sup>5</sup>, finally saying:

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<sup>2</sup> Going farther, calling him the “founder of the cultural-historical school” (cf. Engeström 1988, p. 68), is already a mystification.

<sup>3</sup> “Autochthonous” properly means “stemming from this very land itself” (from Greek *autos* = “itself, self” and *chton* = “earth, soil”). In the present context the term has the meaning of “either used by Vygotsky himself or created in the sphere of cooperation with research workers directly associated with him in the various fields of his activity.”

<sup>4</sup> Apparently, Vygotsky, who already in his youth had shown an interest for Hegel’s philosophy of history (cf. Dobkin 1982, 26), has been stimulated to a more intensive engagement in Hegel’s philosophy of the spirit by a closer reading of K. Bühler’s *Die geistige Entwicklung des Kindes [The mental development of the child]* (cf. Bühler 1924, especially pp. 429 ff.), taking place in 1927/28 and on its part having been inspired by K. Koffka’s *Die Grundlagen der psychischen Entwicklung [The fundamentals of psychical development]* (1925, Osterwieck am Harz) – a book, which propagated a ‘historico-cultural’ orientation as compulsory not only for developmental psychology but for psychology in general (cf. loc. cit., pp. 1 f.) and beside of Bühler’s stressed also the importance of the investigations of K. Groos, W. Köhler, L. Levy-Bruhl, W. Stern, M. Wertheimer, and J. Piaget, thus being a kind of ‘catalyst’ for the development of Vygotsky’s own approach.

<sup>5</sup> In his article about the cultural development of the child, submitted to the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* for publication already the 20<sup>th</sup> July of 1928, Vygotsky had introduced this term as substitution for the hitherto used denomination “(functional) method of double stimulation” (cf. Luria 1928 [submitted for publication the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of 1928], pp. 495 f., 505; Vygotski 1929, pp. 430, 433). N.B.: In the German version of the abstract of Vygotsky’s article this method is called “Werkzeugmethode” (cf. loc. cit., pp. 433 f.).

I am sincerely happy about your joys: The study of Korsakov's psychosis is *very* interesting; in general, pathology + cultural psychology (divergence) is the *principal* means of analysis ... (quoted after Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, p. 23)

The 23<sup>d</sup> of July of the same year (i.e., three months later), Vygotsky in another letter to Leontiev writes by way of introduction: "I wholeheartedly share your sentiments. There is some benefit to a situation in which I[nstrumental] P[sychology] winds up in the category of unprofitable pursuits." (loc. cit., pp. 25 f.; insertions in brackets by Puzyrei)<sup>6</sup> Later on, expressing some second thoughts, he adds:

Let us explain that studying cultural psychology is no joke, not something to do at odd moments or among other things, and no grounds for every new person's own conjectures. (loc. cit., p. 26)

And as footnote there is a remark, referring to Vygotsky's collaborators at the Institute for experimental Defectology (EDI) L.V. Zankov and I.M. Solov'ev: "In a moral sense, I hold them fully responsible for their departure from cultural psychology ..." (ibid., footnote)

By all that, one gets the impression that Vygotsky still in the summer of 1929 wants to see the project, pushed ahead in collaboration mainly with Luria and Leontiev (and at that time more smiled at than attacked, but by all means misunderstood by the colleagues), to be subsumed under a more generally conceived current of research and theorizing (in the broadest sense "cultural-psychologically" oriented) – however, with the particularity that in that "means-stimuli, or psychological tools," play a central role (cf. Vygotski 1929; A.N. Leont'ev in *Sobr. soch.*, tom 1, pp. 23-27, resp. in *Coll. works*, vol. 3, pp. 19-23; and A.N. Leont'ev 2003a, pp. 63 f., 134).<sup>7</sup>

A first contribution to the specification of the terminology then can be found in the short author's foreword to Leontiev's book *The development of memory [Razvitie pamiatii]* (subtitle: "Experimental investigation of the higher psychological functions [Èksperimental'noe issledovanie

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<sup>6</sup> The facts, which Vygotsky is referring to in his cryptic allusion (which is apt to provoke misunderstandings), are explicated as well by A.R. Luria in his autobiography as by K.E. Levitin in his Book *A Dissolving Pattern [Mimoletnyi uzor]. Reflections on the Life and Work of A.R. Luria.*

Thus Luria reports: "In the early years of our collaborative work, our theoretical stance met with little understanding or enthusiasm. People would ask: 'Why cultural psychology? Every process is a mixture of natural and cultural influence. Why historical psychology? One can deal with psychological facts without being interested in the behavior of primitive peoples. Why instrumental psychology? We all use instruments in our experiments.'" (Luria 1979, p. 52)

And Levitin writes: "Luria recalled, not without sarcasm, what Kornilov said: 'Well, just think, >historical< psychology – Why should we study various wild men? Or >instrumental.< Indeed, every psychology is instrumental; I also use a dynamoscope.' Even the director of the Institute of Psychology did not understand that the question had nothing at all to do with the instruments psychologists use, but the means, the tools, that man himself uses to organize his behavior." (quoted after Levitin 1998, p. 51)

<sup>7</sup> This orientation is expressed very clearly in the *Studies in the history of behavior [Istoriia po istorii povedeniia]*, co-authored by Luria and published in the first half of 1930. Here, at the end of the second chapter (entitled "Primitive man and his behavior") Vygotsky identifies his own conception, explicated "in its essential aspects [v ee glavnykh momentakh]," as the "third [tret'ia]" of "three" in this chapter presented and discussed "theories of cultural-psychological development [teorii kul'turno-psikhologicheskogo rasvitiia]" (the first being that of Taylor & Spencer, and the second that of Levy-Bruhl), whereby the specificity of his own approach lies in the assumption "that the basic components of the psychological development of primitive man are to be found in the development of technique, and the corresponding development of social structure [sotsial'nogo stroia]" (quoted after Luria & Vygotsky 1992, p. 84; insertion in brackets after the Russian original: Vygotskii & Lurii 1930, p. 120). In this context also is introduced the term "higher psychological functions [vysshie psikhologicheskie funktsii]" (cf. 1930, p. 62; 1992, p. 44), which is marking the opposite of the "natural psychological functions [estestvennykh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]" (cf. 1930, pp. 66, resp. 1992, 46).

vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii”<sup>8</sup>), dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of July of 1930. Here Leontiev writes by way of introduction:

The present work is the attempt of a monographic investigation, starting from *the theory of the historical development of the higher forms of behavior* [teoriia istoricheskogo razvitiia vysshikh form povedeniia] as it has been first formulated by L.S. Vygotsky and has been developed further during the last years by us together with A.R. Luria (quoted after Leont’ev 2003a, p. 32; transl. and italics P.K.)<sup>9</sup>.

And in the introduction to his article, separated out of the book and published in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* in 1932<sup>10</sup> as the third and last within a series, edited by Luria and Vygotsky under the title “Studies on the cultural development of the child,” we can read:

... in other words, we must create a general theory of the social<sup>11</sup> and historical development of behavior. Such a theory of social genesis (“the theory of cultural development”) was first formulated and brought forward by L.S. Vygotsky.<sup>12</sup> His theory forms the basis of the present experimental-psychological sketch. (Leontiev 1932, 54)

In his ample foreword to Leontiev’s book, apparently penned in September of 1930<sup>13</sup>, the very Vygotsky, adopting Leontiev’s terminology, writes:

In this sense Leontiev’s methodological work is determined by our central idea: the idea of the historical development of human behavior, the historical theory of the higher psychological functions [istoricheskaiia teoriia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]. From the viewpoint of this theory, the historical origin and the development of the higher psychological functions of man, and especially that of the higher functions of memory, is the key for an understanding of their essence [prirody], their composition, their structure, their way of functioning, and at the same time the key to the whole problem of a psychology of man, which is trying to determine adequately the true human content of this psychology. (quoted after Vygotskii 2003, p. 31; transl. and insertion in brackets P.K.)<sup>14</sup>

As it seems, Vygotsky, when penning this, either did not have knowledge yet of the criticism that had been formulated by A. Frankel in his review of the *Studies in the history of*

<sup>8</sup> The second title page is in German and gives as subtitle “Experimentelle Untersuchung der höheren psychologischen Funktionen” (cf. the facsimile in Leont’ev 2001, p. 64).

<sup>9</sup> N.B.: “Linguistically” seen, this wording is a fusion of the two denominations that Leontiev had used as synonyms in his oral presentation on the development of children’s arithmetical thinking (11<sup>th</sup> of October of 1929): “theory of higher behavior [teoriia razvitiia povedeniia]” and “theory of the historical development of the child [teoriia istoricheskogo razvitiia rebenka]” (cf. Leont’ev 2003b, p. 208).

<sup>10</sup> As can be deduced from the list of references, consisting of 23 titles, Luria & Morozova’s “Instrumental reaction in children” and Vygotsky & Luria’s “Essays on the history of the behavior” being the both most actual ones (cf. Leontiev 1932, p. 81), the article had been submitted for publication already in 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Here it is not clear if “social” has the meaning of “social [sotsial’nyi]” or “societal [obshchestvennyi],” as the original (book) version does not contain this passage.

<sup>12</sup> In a footnote Leontiev refers to the “bibliography at the end of this article.”

<sup>13</sup> In his letter to Leontiev, dated the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, he says: “I found out that the book is ‘scheduled’ for the four[th] quarter, and that I can hand in the preface in September” (Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, p. 30; insertion in brackets Puzyrei).

<sup>14</sup> Vygotsky’s preliminary reflections, resulting in this detailed statement, are documented in a short memorandum which is preserved in the Vygotsky family archive and runs as follows: “**NB!** We are missing a name, a designation. It should not be a signboard (intuitivism). Not instrum., not cultural, not signif[icative], not struct., etc. Not only because of the blend with oth[er] theories but also because of the int[e]rnal lack of clarity, e.g., the idea of analogy with instr. = only scaffolding, dissimilarity is more essential. Culture: but where is culture itself from (it is nonprimordial, and this is hidden). So: 1) for the method the designation meth. of d[ou]ble stimulation. 2) for the theory as a whole a) psychol. of higher functions, i.e., b) histor. psychology or c) histor. theory of higher psychol. f[u]nctions. Because the central concept for us is concept of higher function: it contains a theory a) of its development, b) of its psychol. nature; c) of the method of its investigation.” (quoted after Zavershneva 2010a, 30)

*behavior*, a review that was entitled “Against the eclecticism in psychology and pedagogy” and was published apparently in August 1930 (for more details cf. Cole 1979, pp. 208 f.), or he assessed Frankel’s criticism at this moment as only marginal, as an event that did not need to be commented.<sup>15</sup>

The situation was completely different, when Vygotsky and Leontiev about more than one and a half year later were forced to co-author a self-critical enclosure to the book, which was the indispensable condition for its release (that finally took place in the course of the year 1932)<sup>16</sup>, the book having indeed gone to the press already in the late spring of 1931 (cf. A.A. Leontiev *ibid.*) but having been withheld because of the growing criticism of the conceptions of the “Vygotsky-Luria-group,” uttered within the broader context of an assessment of the “leading” psychological theories (cf. below, “chapter” 3).

In that enclosure, it is first indicated that in the meantime since the book had been completed (“more than two years ago”) there have been realized “significant supplies and modifications” of “the basic psychological conception,” guiding Leontiev’s investigations, that is of “the conception of the historical development of the higher psychological functions [kontseptsii istoricheskogo razvitiia vysshich psikhologicheskikh funktsii],” an indication that later on is explicated in the following way:

In its essence the so called [tak nazyvaiemaia] theory of the historical (or cultural-historical) development in psychology [teoriia istoricheskogo (ili kul’turno-istoricheskogo) razvitiia v psikhologii] denominates the theory of the *higher psychological functions* (logical memory, voluntary attention, speech-thinking [rechevoe myshlenie], volitional processes, etc.) – *nothing more, and nothing less*. The origin and development of the higher psychological functions, their structure and their 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 topic of these investigations. (quoted after Vygotskii & Leont’ev 2003, pp. 199 f.; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.)<sup>17</sup>

In all probability, Leontiev had not only co-signed the self-criticism but was really its co-author – but that he in no way was content with the conclusions that Vygotsky had drawn out of it, can be deduced from his letter to Vygotsky, dated the 5<sup>th</sup> of March of 1932. In it he not only expresses his preoccupation about the course of revision (“significant supplies and modifications”) adopted by Vygotsky but also discloses his own orientation: “the return to the initial theses and their development along new lines” (cf. A.A. Leontiev 2005, pp. 35, 37)<sup>18</sup>. At this, his call for a return ‘back to the roots’ even takes on an imploring-dramatic character as he is reproducing exactly the terminology that Vygotsky had used in his letter from the 23<sup>d</sup> of July of 1929: First, he is quoting word by word from those passages in which Vygotsky had used formulations such as “cultural psychology” and “i[nstrumental] p[sychology]” (cf. Leont’ev 2003e, p. 232), and after that

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<sup>15</sup> So far, the “handwritten notes,” reported by Vygotskaia & Lifanova (1999b, p. 3), in which Vygotsky under the title “Distortions in the review,” and probably referring to Frankel’s review, “refutes the reviewer’s mistaken statements” have to be dated later.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rückriem 2001, p. 408; A.A. Leontiev 2005, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed characterization and assessment of Vygotsky and Leontiev’s self-criticism cf. Keiler 2002, pp. 316-323.

<sup>18</sup> Later on, the quintessence of the letter is characterized by A.A. Leontiev in the following way:

“He [Leontiev] is worried about the dilution and erosion of Vygotsky’s ideas about cultural psychology – or as it was previously called, instrumental psychology – as they spread. Vygotsky does nothing to prevent this and Luria, easily carried away with eclecticism even contributes to this problem. Leontiev is by no means setting himself against Vygotsky, and in the letter there is not a single reference to some alternative; on the contrary, he cites to Vygotsky his own letter written three years earlier, reproaching him for straying from his own principles. Leontiev – together with the 1929 Vygotsky versus the 1932 Vygotsky – appears to be a stronger supporter of Vygotsky than Vygotsky himself, reproaching Vygotsky for inconsistency.” (loc. cit., p. 40 f.; insertion in brackets P.K.)

(within the scope of his criticism of Luria and the explication of his own position) he is using several times the grammalogue “CP” for “Cultural Psychology” (cf. loc. cit., pp. 233 ff.).

By all that, Leontiev’s appeal was definitely “out of time.” Factually, the original terminology, which was apt to provoke misunderstandings (cf. above, footnotes 6 and 14), had been left behind by Vygotsky already more than a year *before* the joint self-criticism was penned. Thus, the survey of the contents of chapter 10 of his *Pedology of the adolescent [Pedologiiia podrostka]*, written in the second half of 1930 and published in the first half of 1931, already presents the *short form* “Theory of the development of the higher psychological functions [Teoriia razvitiia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]” (cf. Vygotskii 1931, p. 214; resp. Vygotsky 1994, p. 185).

## 2. Intermediate reflections

After all, concerning the conceptions held by Vygotsky in the period from 1928 until 1931, the most adequate (and most authentic) denominations are: “theory (conception) of the cultural (historical) development of the higher psychological functions,” respectively more precise: “theory of the cultural-historical determined origin and development of the higher psychological functions,” also being possible the short form: “theory of the development of the higher psychological functions” – as long as there is not preferred the (behaviorism-oriented) formulation “theory of the social [societal] and historical development of (human) behavior,” respectively “theory of the historical development of the higher forms of behavior,” a variant, which has been used by Vygotsky as well as by Leontiev<sup>19</sup>, whereas the denomination “theory of cultural development,” as used as well by Leontiev as by several critics, indeed seems ‘acceptable’ (because of its reference to the title of the series of articles which, under the editorship of Luria and Vygotsky, had been published in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology*<sup>20</sup>), but it has the disadvantage of obscuring the differences to other (earlier or later) variants of an unspecifically conceived “culture-psychology [Kulturpsychologie]” or “ethnopsychology,” this problem being even more aggravating, when, with reference to the Vygotsky-Luria-Leontiev-approach, denominations such as “cultural psychology” or “theory of cultural-psychological development” are used (cf. above, footnotes 6 and 14).

For all that, the *original version* of the “theory of the cultural-historical development of the higher psychological functions” (which A.A. Leontiev much later will call “Vygotsky’s ‘classical’ cultural-historical conception” [cf. 2005, p. 43]) can be identified by four essential characteristics:

1. the basic idea that in the psychological development of the child there are two lines (the “natural” and the “cultural”) which at a certain point of ontogenesis meet and merge into each

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With all that, Leontiev’s disappointment with Vygotsky is to be understood even better, if one takes into consideration Vygotsky’s enthusiasm about Leontiev’s book in special and the “state of affairs with our idea for summer 1930” in general, expressed by him in his letter to Leontiev, dated 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1930, i.e., when the book already had been passed to the publishing house and Vygotsky was projecting his (original) foreword for it (cf. Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, pp. 30 f.).

<sup>19</sup> N.B.: Still in their presentations at the 1<sup>st</sup> All-Union Congress for the study of behavior, taking place in Leningrad from January, 26<sup>th</sup> until February, 1<sup>st</sup> of 1930, the both of them used the formulations “higher behavior,” respectively “higher forms of behavior,” whereas Luria preferred the variant “cultural forms of behavior” (cf. Vygotskii 1930; Luriiia 1930; Leont’ev 1930).

<sup>20</sup> It has to be mentioned here that the title of the series “Studies on the cultural development of the child” was not yet presented on occasion of the publication of Luria’s “pilot” article “The problem of the cultural behavior of the child” in 1928, but was introduced only in 1929 in the context of the publication of the English version of Vygotsky’s article “The problem of the cultural development of the child,” which had been published in Russian already in 1928 in the first issue of the journal *Pedologiiia*, co-founded by Vygotsky. In 1929 only appearing in an editorial footnote that identifies Vygotsky’s article as “second in the series of studies on the cultural development of the child” (cf. Vygotski 1929, p. 415), the title then serves as a general headline for Leontiev’s article on the development of the voluntary attention of the child (cf. Leontiev 1932, p. 52).

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other in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish them and follow the course of each of them separately;

2. the conviction that in the process of the transformation of the natural (“lower” [“nizshikh”], elementary) psychological processes in culturally determined “higher” psychological functions “means-stimuli” or “psychological tools” play the decisive role<sup>21</sup>;

3. the assumption that the genesis of the “higher” (specifically human) psychological functions (logical memory, voluntary attention, speech-thinking [rechevoe myshlenie], volitional processes, etc.) is coming to pass in four stages, whereof the last one can be characterized as “ingrowing,” respectively “interiorisation” (“interiorizatsiia”) of the means and methods with which the child is “mastering” (i.e., controlling, organizing) her (his) behavior,

4. the application of the “method of double stimulation,” also called “instrumental method” („Werkzeugmethode“).

From this *original version* of the “theory of the cultural-historical development of the higher psychological functions,” which may be qualified as “instrumentalistic” and is documented in Luria’s “The problem of the cultural behavior of the child” (1928), Vygotsky’s “The problem of the cultural development of the child” (1928, 1929), “The genetic roots of thinking and speech” ([1929] cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 1, pp. 101-120), “Fundamental problems of contemporary defectology” ([1929] cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 2, 29-51), “The instrumental method in psychology” ([1930] cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 3, 85-89), Leontiev’s *The development of memory* ([1931/32] cf. Leont’ev 2003a)<sup>22</sup>, as well as in Vygotsky & Luria’s *Studies in the history of behavior* ([1930] Luria & Vygotsky 1992), there have to be distinguished *two revised versions*.

The *first revision*, documented a) in Vygotsky’s oral presentation from the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1930 on “psychological systems” (cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 3, pp. 91-107), b) in the fragment (later entitled by the editor) “Concrete human psychology” (cf. Vygotskii 1986, resp. Vygotsky 1989)<sup>23</sup>, and c) in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter (“assignment”) of the *Pedology of the adolescent* ([1931] cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 5, pp. 167-184), is characterized by

1. the renunciation of the principle of the uni-linear formation of the higher psychological functions and the turn to a systemic point of view, taking into account the mutual connections and interdependencies of the several functions;

2. the formulation of the basic principle that every higher function originally was shared between (at least) two persons, that it was a reciprocal psychological process;

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<sup>21</sup> The respective central statement of the “classical” approach, formulated in Vygotsky’s 1929-article “Fundamental problems of contemporary defectology,” runs as follows: “The artificial devices, which by analogy with technology are sometimes called psychological tools, are directed toward mastering behavioral processes – someone else’s or one’s own – in the same way that technology attempts to control the processes of nature. [...] The use of psychological tools modifies the whole course and structure of psychological function[s], giving them a new form.” (quoted after *Coll. works*, Vol. 2, p. 44; omission and correction in brackets P.K.; for the Russian version cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 5, p. 26)

<sup>22</sup> No English version available.

<sup>23</sup> As the text-analysis shows, this fragment is unmistakably a direct parallel text to the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Pedology of the adolescent*. Thus, Puzyrei’s (the editor’s) dating it to 1929 (cf. 1986, p. 51, resp. 1989, p. 54) cannot be accepted, and this even less, as Puzyrei himself is leading this dating *ad absurdum* in his note no. 25, where he is (indirectly) locating the fragment “in the early ‘30s” (cf. 1986, p. 65, resp. 1989, p. 75).



3. a (concordant with this basic principle) reformulation of the concept of interiorization: as every “higher” form of behavior, respectively “higher” psychological function in its origin is a *social* (sotsial’naia) form of behavior, it must at first have the character of an external operation. That is, the functions of memory, thinking, and attention (to mention only three) in their origin are external operations, including the use of external signs, being a particular form of social relation, a form that cannot be realized without signs. Thus, the sign originally is a means of influencing others and only later becomes a means of affecting oneself. At this, in the course of development every external function is interiorized, that is, it is losing by and by the traits of an external operation and is converted into an internal one.

The *second revision* (essentially realized under the impression of the growing criticism), as it is documented in the theoretical-methodological part of the (later so called) *History of the development of the higher psych[olog]ical functions* (cf. Vygotskii 1960, resp. *Coll. works*, Vol. 4, pp. 1-119), i.e., the very part which probably has been definitely re-elaborated in 1931<sup>24</sup>, is characterized by the following additional modifications:

1. the attempt to give a new interpretation of the basic idea of the two lines and their “mergence” in the course of the psychological development of the child by a reference to the concept of “systems of action,” as it had been introduced by the zoologist H.S. Jennings already in the beginning of the century;
2. the strict conceptual differentiation between tools and signs (an indirect self-criticism of the concept of “psychological tools”);
3. a stronger accentuation of the *social* aspects of culture compared with its “*real*” (i.e., oriented in the material things) aspects.

With all that, it is difficult to range in that famous study entitled “Tool and symbol in child development,” written with the aim of publication in C. Murchisons *Handbook of Child Psychology*, and co-authored by Vygotsky and Luria (cf. Vygotsky & Luria 1994). The difficulty lies in the fact that in the pertinent literature this study is commonly dated with 1930<sup>25</sup>, that is *before* the definite re-elaboration of the theoretical-methodological part of the *History of the development of the higher psych[olog]ical functions* – a dating that does not fit at all with the fact that Guillaume & Meyerson’s (1930) significant observation that chimpanzees in their use of “tools” resemble aphasics, an observation which for the first time is referred to in “Tool and symbol” (cf. Vygotsky & Luria 1994, pp. 111 f.), despite its utmost systematic importance<sup>26</sup> is not

<sup>24</sup> There is some reason to believe that the re-elaboration of the theoretical-methodological part of the *History of the development of the higher psych[olog]ical functions* (consisting of five chapters and originally bearing the title “Treatise on the higher psychological functions [Issledovanie vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]”) already had remarkably advanced before there was penned the self-critical enclosure to Leontiev’s book, the latter, as will be remembered, having the subtitle “experimental investigation of the higher psychological functions.” Thus, Vygotsky’s affirmation that, since Leontiev’s book was completed “more than two years ago,” there had been “significant supplies and modifications” in the “basic psychological conception,” guiding the research program of the “Vygotsky-Luria-group,” was not only an evasive defense but well substantiated.

<sup>25</sup> Thus already in the appendix (“register of the works of Prof. L.S. Vygotsky”) of the original version of *Myshlenie i rech’* (cf. Vygotskii 1934b, pp. 321, 323). For the dubious history of publication of this study (especially in its Russian version) cf. van der Veer & Valsiner 1991, p. 188, and van der Veer and Valsiner in Vygotsky 1994, p. 170.

<sup>26</sup> As it is clear to see, this observation for Vygotsky was the key to the understanding of the qualitative difference between the “instrumental thinking” (K. Bühler’s [1924] “Werkzeugdenken”) of human beings and chimpanzees: the “understanding of mechanical connections and the invention of mechanical means for mechanical ends” (cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 1, p. 110) is ‘humanized’ by speech.

mentioned in the “History”-monograph but only reappears in the context of Vygotsky’s foreword to the 1934 published Russian edition of K. Koffka’s book *The fundamentals of psychical development* (cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 3, p. 208)<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, Jennings’ concept of “systems of action,” which is characteristic of the “History”-monograph (cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 4, pp. 20, 38 63, 201, 244), neither reappears in “Tool and symbol” nor in other later works of Vygotsky. Hence, the dating of “Tool and symbol” to 1930 must be principally put in doubt (cf. in this sense already the Vygotsky-bibliographies in *Sobr. soch.*, tom 6, p. 371, *Coll. works*, Vol. 6, p. 292, and Vygotskaia & Lifanova 1996, p. 402), although the correct declaration cannot be more precise than “with the highest probability after the definite re-elaboration of the first five chapters of the *History of the development of the higher psych[ological] functions*.”<sup>28</sup>

In regard to the common practice to subsume under the label of a “conception of *cultural-historical* development” also the later work of Vygotsky (1932-34), in which (the same as already in some writings of the “early” Vygotsky)<sup>29</sup> the *sociality of man in its multivariety of forms* is stressed as the essential (inner) condition of his psychological development, it has to be repeated here, that after all this subsumption can be justified only in the scope of that auxiliary construction which has been applied by the present author already elsewhere (cf. Keiler 1991, 1997/99, 2002, 2005). This auxiliary construction is based on the remarkable affinity of especially the late work of Vygotsky to the views of L. Feuerbach and is featuring the argument, that the afore said conception of the cultural-historical determination of the development of the specifically human psychological functions has to be understood in that more general sense, that has been explicated by Feuerbach in the following way:

Thus *man* is the *God of man*. That he is, he has to thank *Nature*; that he is *man*, he has to thank *man*; spiritually as well as physically he can achieve nothing without his fellow-man. [...] Wit, acumen, imagination, feeling as distinguished from sensation, reason as a subjective faculty, – all these so-called powers of the soul are *powers of humanity*, not of man as an individual; they are products of culture, products of human society. Only where man has *contact* and *friction* with his fellow-man are wit and sagacity kindled [...] and only where man *communicates* with man, only in speech, a social act, awakes reason. To ask a question and to answer are the first acts of thought. Thought originally demands two. It is not until man has reached an advanced stage of culture that he can double himself, so as to play the part of another within himself. (quoted after Feuerbach 1957, p. 83; italics after the German original FGW, Vol. 5, pp. 166 f.; omissions in brackets P.K.)

Or, resuming the whole chain of reasoning in two sentences: “... man, who directly arose from nature, was still only a pure natural, not human being. Man [as human] is a product of man, of culture, of history” (quoted after FGW, Vol. 10, p. 178; transl. and insertion in brackets P.K.).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> It has to be emphasized here that (the 1925-version of) Koffka’s book not only was influential on the elaboration of Vygotsky’s “instrumentalistic” approach (cf. above, footnote 4), but, as it is documented in numberless references, served as a permanent source of inspiration for Vygotsky until the end of his career.

<sup>28</sup> A. Yasnitsky is dating “Tool and symbol” (as it seems to me, correctly) “not earlier 1931, probably 1932” (cf. Yasnitsky 2011a, p. 56).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Vygotskii 1924; Vygotskii 1925.

<sup>30</sup> Vygotsky’s nearness to Feuerbach in this point is demonstrated, though not explicitly mentioned, very nicely in M.G. Iaroshevskii’s epilogue to the sixth volume of the *Collected works*, where he, in regard to the Russian version of “Tool and symbol” („Orudie i znak v razvitii rebenka“), is talking about Vygotsky’s conception of the “initial integration of the child into the microsocal community [mikrosotsial’nuu obshchnost’] in the midst of which occurs the miracle [chudo] of converting his natural, very simple functions into higher, cultural-historical functions,” a process, that is “ensure[d]” by “tools and signs, and mainly speech signs” (quoted after *Coll. works*, Vol. 6, p. 247; for the Russian version cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 6, p. 331). – The general basis of the argumentation is of course Feuerbach’s ‘a-historical’ (i.e., universally valid) fundamental idea, that “the *essence* of man is contained only in the community, the *unity of man with man*” (FGW, Vol. 9, p. 339; transl. P.K.). In accordance with this idea and in consequence of his earlier reflections about culture being “nonprimordial” (cf. above, footnote 14), Vygotsky in his later work conceives

At any rate, it has to be recorded that, despite all the mentioned revisions, the “higher psychological functions” stay the central topic of Vygotsky’s research and theorizing until his untimely death in June 1934, this topic having been present implicitly already in the “early” Vygotsky’s struggle against the reflexology of V.M. Bekhterev and I.P. Pavlov’s “theory of higher nervous activity” (cf. Keiler 2002, pp. 79-88, 91-115), at that time still as terminologically not fixed counter-concept to “higher nervous activity (behavior) of animals.” The then in 1928-1930 used (behaviorism-oriented) formulations “higher behavior,” respectively “higher” or “cultural forms of behavior” can be assessed as a preliminary attempt to denominate the “key to the whole problem of a psychology of man, which is trying to determine adequately the true human content of this psychology” in a way, that was also acceptable by the “mainstream” of Soviet-Russian “objective psychology.”

### **3. The terminology and arguments of the critics in the years 1931 and 1932**

As has been already suggested, Vygotsky’s clarification, integrated in the self-critical enclosure to Leontiev’s book, of what it is about with the *so called* “theory of the historical (or cultural-historical) development,” respectively “theory of the historical development of the higher forms of behavior” or simply “theory of the higher psychological functions,” took place already under the impression of the extending criticisms that, in the aftermath of Frankel’s review of the *Studies in the history of behavior*, were put forward against the ideas of the “Vygotsky-Luria-group” – criticisms which, in the context of the discussion on the “reactology” of K.N. Kornilov, already in the spring of 1931 had assumed a new quality which could not be ignored any longer.

Thus, for instance, the afore said discussion on reactology was brought to a close by a resolution from the side of the party cell of the Psychological Institute of the Moscow University (in consequence of which Kornilov was removed from the post as the institute’s director), in which there is mentioned in a depreciatory manner “the ‘culturological’ [‘kul’turnicheskaia’] theory of Vygotsky and Luria” (cf. “Results of the discussion on reactological psychology”, p. 388; transl. P.K.).

With A.A. Talankin, member of the party cell and very active participant in the discussion, there appears for the first time the phrase “cultural-historical conception,” and this precisely as a subsumption of Vygotsky and Luria’s approach under a more general theoretical current.

Thus, in his oral presentation at the All-Union Congress on Psychotechnics and the Psychophysiology of Labor about the “turnaround on the psychological front” (delivered in May 1931, and later on published in the journal *Sovetskaia psikhonevrologiia*), in a special part Talankin reproaches the “Vygotsky-Luria-group [gruppa Vygotskogo i Lurii]” for their tendency to an “uncritical transfer of various Western European psychological theories that are especially fashionable now” into Soviet psychology: “In one period this was Freudianism [frejdizm]; next came Gestalt psychology [Gestaltpsychologie]; then came cultural psychology [kul’turpsikhologiiia], and, finally, the current stemming from Karl Bühler.” (quoted after Talankin 2000, p. 10; for the original version cf. Talankin 1931, p. 15)

And in direct continuation he states:

The conception of *Vygotsky and Luria* is a cultural-historical one [Kontseptsiiia Vygotskogo i Lurii – kul’turno-istoricheskaiia]. Their merit is that they pose the problem of development in Soviet psychology. (loci citati)

After this quite positive evaluation (cf. also Vygotsky in his letter to Luria from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1931: Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, p. 33), Talankin, however, criticizes the concept of

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culture explicitly as a *derived* phenomenon, as “a result of social life and the concerted activity of man” (cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 3, p. 145; transl. P.K.).

“psychological tools” as not being conform with the Marxist concept of tools and, in continuation, censures Vygotsky and Luria’s understanding of culture as “crudely mechanistic,” reducing culture to “the sum total of things, instruments, and symbols,” showing “elements of real [nastoiashego] instrumentalism.” At the end of his disclosure he comes to a conclusion which is nullifying all foregoing positive assessments (f. i. that “the *Vygotsky and Luria* group is undoubtedly talented”), stating that “their conception of cultural psychology [kul’turno-psikhologicheskoi kontseptsiei] must be opposed.” As it “has not yet been subjected to criticism,” it has to be shown that

a Marxist approach to the problem of the development of mental processes [psikhicheskikh processov], on the basis of the history of labor, indeed differs radically from the approach to the problem of development we find in *Vygotsky and Luria* (Talankin 2000, p. 11; resp. Talankin 1931, p. 15).

For our concern, it is of foremost interest that no doubt in Talankin’s criticism already appears the wording “cultural-historical,” but that Talankin does not use yet the formal denomination “cultural-historical theory” for the approach represented by the “Vygotsky-Luria-group.”

But that, however, is the fact in a text which cannot be dated exactly nor do we know the identity of its author. It has been “found among Vygotsky’s papers,” consists of “19 yellowed typewritten pages,” is entitled “Against the cultural-historical perspective in psychology,” and the initial letters of the author’s first and last names are “A.Sh.” (cf. Vygotskaia & Lifanova 1999, 79). Vygotskaia and Lifanova identify it as a “review” of Vygotsky and Luria’s book *Studies in the history of behavior*, admit that they have no knowledge if it was published, but declare that they “know with certainty that Lev Semenovich read it” (Vygotskaia & Lifanova, 1999a, p. 79). Certain formulations in the text admit of the assumption, that this review was written in the aftermath of the resolution of the party cell of the Moscow Psychological Institute and Talankin’s claim for a serious critique of the “Vygotsky-Luria-group,” thus, probably in the second half of the year 1931 or later. That Vygotsky could read it as a typescript, may find an explanation in that it had been submitted to one of the journals, of which he was a member of the editorial board, so that he had the opportunity to take his stand already before its publication and possibly write a comment or even a replication, that could be published together with the review.

For its systematic significance – for the first time the label “cultural-historical theory”<sup>31</sup> is applied well calculated and repeatedly – it seems justified to reproduce “outtakes” of the review in the same extension as they have been quoted already by Vygotskaia & Lifanova:

One example of a noncritical perception of various positions in bourgeois psychology is the work of L.S. Vygotsky and A.R. Luria, which has not yet been subjected to any essential criticism.

Positions that are formalistic and idealistic in their essence are combined in a bizarre way with quite a number of mechanistic moments. However, despite all the eclecticism of Luria’s and Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory [kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii], idealistic positions constitute the core of its methodological principles.

For the cultural-historical theory, the psychological evolution of collective farm workers in Tajikistan [kolkhoznikov tadjikistana] consists solely in their transformation into simply cultured people. The fact that this is a process of transformation of the peasant into an active conscious builder of socialist society is absolutely beyond the ability of the cultural-historical theory to ascertain.

The abstract historicism of Vygotsky and Luria, expressed in the thesis of cultural man in general, proves to be idealist in its essence. This abstract historicism of the authors of the cultural-historical theory emanates from their basic methodological approach to the problem of development.

All works built on the basis of the cultural-historical conception [kul’turno-istoricheskoi kontseptsii] require disregarding the child’s active social involvement.

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<sup>31</sup> It has to be emphasized here, that from the linguistic point of view this label is a *barbarism*, based on a distortion of words, transmogrifying the correct wording “theory of cultural-historical development.”

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Seen through the eyes of cultural-historical theory, one cannot discover what is most important in the evolution of the mind [psikhiki] of the Tajik collective farm worker [kolkhoznika-tadjika]: one cannot understand what is specific, what is due to the socialist character of restoring the economy and the everyday life of the Tajik village. (quoted after Vygodskaja & Lifanova, 1999a, p. 80)<sup>32</sup>

That this critical assessment of Vygotsky and Luria's views certainly passed over Vygotsky's desk but in the end was not published, is indicated by the fact, that the easy to use (and close to the jargon of German police reports<sup>33</sup>) shortened form "kul'turno-istoricheskaia teoriia," respectively "kul'turno-istoricheskaia kontsepsiia," which had been anticipated already by Talankin, was not applied either in the next two years within the continuing discussion about the "Vygotsky-Luria-group." Thus for instance, M.P. Feofanov in his critical article "The theory of cultural development in pedology as an eclectic<sup>34</sup> conception with basically idealist roots," published in the first issue of 1932 of the journal *Pedologija*, in total is using 21 times the formulation "theory of cultural development," that is, exactly the same wording that Leontiev uses in his paper, published the same year in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, Feofanov using this denomination 10 times without quotation marks (cf. Feofanov 2000, pp. 12, 17, 19, 20, 26, 29), putting 10 times quotation marks to "cultural development" (cf. loc. cit., pp. 17, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29) and once to the complete term (cf. p. 18).

In the editorial footnote to Feofanov's article, there is reproduced the latter variant (i.e., the whole expression "theory of cultural development" put in quotation marks), but, following the wording of the 1931 resolution of the party cell of the Moscow Psychological Institute, it is also used the phrase "culturological theory [kul'turnicheskaia teoriia]" – though this time without quotation marks (cf. Feofanov 1932, p. 221).

Only two issues later, in the same journal there was published a "review" authored by the two Leningrad psychologists R. Abel'skaia and Ia.S. Neopikhonova, and entitled "The problem of development in German psychology and its influence on Soviet pedology and psychology,"<sup>35</sup> in which were repeated several points of the criticism, that had been put forward already by Feofanov mainly with reference to several passages in Vygotsky's *Pedology of the school age* (1928) and those chapters<sup>36</sup> of his correspondence-course-"textbook" *Pedology of the adolescent*, which had been published in 1929.

The object of reference for the both of them "colleagues" of Vygotsky was the already in 1926 published book by H. Werner *Einführung in die Entwicklungspsychologie*, the "review" of which was taken by them as occasion to compare Werner's views with that of Vygotsky, as they were expressed in the *Studies in the history of behavior* and in the last part of *Pedology of the adolescent*, that had been released in 1931. And it was the by no way hidden intention of the "reviewers," not only to criticize Werner's mistakes but to prove that similar mistakes had also been committed in "Soviet pedology and psychology," especially by Vygotsky and Luria.

For our concern it is of interest that Abel'skaia and Neopikhonova by themselves are avoiding any labeling, rather are speaking of "Vygotsky & Luria's book" (cf. Abel'skaia & Neopikhonova 2000, p. 40), "the works of Vygotsky" (loc. cit., p. 41) or "Vygotsky's writings"

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<sup>32</sup> For the original Russian version cf. Vygodskaja & Lifanova 1996, p. 106.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. for instance: "suspicious observation" instead of "observation of something suspicious" or the notorious "conspiratorial apartment" (instead of "apartment, rented for conspiratorial purposes").

<sup>34</sup> In the Russian original it is, oddly enough, "electric conception [elektricheskaia kontsepsiia]" (cf. Feofanov 1932, p. 221).

<sup>35</sup> It can be deduced from the first note to the text, that it is the printed (as it seems, not very much edited) version of a report, Abel'skaia and Neopikhonova had presented to the Department of Pedology of the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute "A.I. Herzen" – possibly with the intention to torpedo Vygotsky's teaching activity, having started there in March of 1932 (cf. Abel'skaia & Neopikhonova 2000, p. 44, and van der Veer & Valsiner 1991, p. 380).

<sup>36</sup> In the original also addressed as "assignments [zadaniia]" (cf. *Sobr. soč.*, tom 6, p. 370, respectively Vygodskaja & Lifanova 1996, p. 400).

(loc. cit., p. 42). The labeling appears only at the end within an editorial note which is separated from the “review” by a dividing line. Here, in the first instance, it is cleared up that Vygotsky and Luria’s “theory ‘of cultural development’” is *not* representing *the* “Soviet pedology and psychology,” as Abel’skaia and Neopikhonova had mistakenly claimed. And after that, with reference to Feofanov’s article and “further critical articles, to be published in the next issues of our journal,”<sup>37</sup> the “afore said theory [ukazannaia teoriia]” is condemned as suffering from “fundamental methodological defects” (cf. Abel’skaia & Neopikhanova 1932, p. 36).

#### 4. Intermediate résumé

As an intermediate résumé we may record as blunt facts that, concerning the labeling of the conceptions sustained by the “Vygotsky-Luria-group” in the period between 1928 and 1930/31, in the general discussion there were not taken into consideration neither the denomination variants “historical theory of the higher psychological functions” or “conception of the historical development of the higher psychological functions,” respectively “theory of the historical (or cultural-historical) development in psychology,” as they had been used by Vygotsky himself in his detailed foreword to Leontiev’s book and in the subsequently written self-critical enclosure; nor the variant “theory of the historical development of the higher forms of behavior,” which had been used by Leontiev in his foreword to the book; nor the variant “theory of the development of the higher psychological functions” as chosen by Vygotsky for the survey of the contents of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Pedology of the adolescent*. Rather, in 1932 the label most used by the critics was directly concordant with the denomination that Leontiev had chosen in his article, published the same year in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology*: “theory of cultural development” – though with the difference, that the critics frequently used quotation marks, either to signalize the dubiousness of the whole enterprise (“the so called ...”) or to put in question the adequacy of characterizing the developmental processes under investigation as “cultural” (as contrasted with “natural”) development.

It has to be recorded also that the criticisms were published at an instant, when Vygotsky himself already had recognized that the approach under attack had no substance for a further development even in ‘defused’ form, and that there had to be opened up qualitatively new perspectives for the future research (perspectives that are sketched *ex negativo* already in the enclosure to Leontiev’s book and in Vygotsky’s 1931/32 critique of J. Piaget)<sup>38</sup>, whereas Leontiev’s perspectives laid in the “return to the initial theses and their development along new lines” (A.A. Leontiev 2005, p. 37)<sup>39</sup>.

For all that, the publication of Leontiev’s book *The development of memory*, originally being planned already for the end of 1930,<sup>40</sup> indeed signified a decisive ‘nodal point’ in his career. If

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<sup>37</sup> Irony of fate: the announced “further critical articles” in the end did not appear, as *Pedologiia* closed down already in the very same year (cf. van der Veer & Valsiner 1991, p. 380).

<sup>38</sup> The respective “critical investigation” first was published as introduction into the Russian combined edition of Piaget’s *Le langage et la pensée chez l’enfant* and *Le jugement et le raisonnement chez l’enfant* in a single volume, entitled *Speech and Thinking of the Child* (cf. Vygotskii 1932), and was later integrated as second “chapter” in Vygotsky’s (posthumously and under dubious circumstances compiled) book *Thinking and Speech [Myshlenie i rech’]* which, after a considerable editorial delay, finally was released in the beginning of 1935 (under the misleading year-date “1934”).

<sup>39</sup> N.B.: The “new lines,” followed by Leontiev in the mid thirties (and disclosed in his 1936 criticism of Vygotsky), consisted, simplistically spoken, on one hand in carrying instrumentalism to its extreme, conceiving even the most elementary and intimate forms of human sociality (f. i. the mother-child-dyade) as instrumental relationships (cf. Leont’ev 1998, p. 121), and on the other hand in the inversion of the analogy that had served as the basis of Vygotsky’s concept of “psychological tools.” That is, Leontiev did not conceive language any more as a tool, but vice versa treated tools as if they were language, i.e., as “means in which is incarnated [oveshchestvlennym] the societal consciousness and thinking” (cf. *ibid.*; transl. P.K.).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. above, footnote 13.

having been published in the same year as Vygotsky and Luria's *Studies in the history of behavior*, the book would have met, beyond doubt, with a great interest on the side of the reading public, serving in the later discussions as point of reference for not talking about the "Vygotsky-Luria-group" but the "Vygotsky-Luria-Leontiev-group." But with the delay in the publication of almost two years, the beforehand high decorated book<sup>41</sup> in the end was nothing more than the proverbial "dead dog," the more so as Vygotsky and Leontiev with their subsequently written and together with the book published self-criticism already had anticipated and 'neutralized' all still possible attacks *ad personam* Leontiev.

## 5. The official introduction of the label "cultural-historical theory" by P.I. Razmyslov (1934)

If, concerning the year 1933, in the literature relevant to the subject there are no reports about official statements concerning the "Vygotsky-Luria-Group" and their "theory of cultural development," this does not mean that at this time they were out of danger. Rather, the campaign of denying the "theory of cultural development" any right of existence at all was carried on 'behind closed doors'<sup>42</sup>, gaining publicity again in the spring of 1934 in the context of a 'general account' that was presented according to all rules of public defamation.

As the „executor“ acted a certain P.I. Razmyslov, who in his quality as head of a commission, that had been constituted to investigate the „ideological premises“ of the whole research and publication activities hitherto realized by Vygotsky and Luria,<sup>43</sup> in issue No. 4 of the year 1934 in the journal *Book and Proletarian Revolution (Kniga i Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia)*<sup>44</sup> published a final report that had the defamatory label "cultural-historical theory" already in its title: „On Vygotsky's and Luria's 'cultural-historical theory of psychology' [O 'kul'turno-istoricheskoi teorii psikhologii' Vygotskogo i Luria].“ In the text itself there is used six times the long version of the label "cultural-historical theory of psychology" and once the shortened form "cultural-historical theory," each time enclosed in quotation marks. In one place Razmyslov criticizes Vygotsky and Luria for their discussing the problems of culture in an abstract way under the perspective of a "cultural European" and "in the spirit of idealist, bourgeois, cultural-historical schools [v dukhe idealisticheskikh burjuaznykh kul'turno-istoricheskikh shkol]" (Razmyslov 1934, 79; resp. Razmyslov 2000, 47).

The point of departure of Razmyslov's attack was the reproach, meanwhile having advanced to a cliché, that the "cultural-historical theory" were too general and not taking into account the class membership of the children whose development was under investigation. Moreover, in

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<sup>41</sup> As we can read in G. Rückriem's annotations on Leontiev's curriculum vitae, the book, before being passed to the publishing house, had gained "the 1<sup>st</sup> price of GLAVNAUKA and the TsEKUBU-price as the best opus of [those presented by] Soviet scientists [in that year]" (cf. Rückriem 2001, p. 408; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.).

<sup>42</sup> In this sense there has to be interpreted also the 'conversation' to which Vygotsky "was summoned by [M.B.] Mitin quite unexpectedly" in November of 1933 (cf. Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, pp. 47 f.; insertion in brackets P.K.), and which he afterwards, as it seems, has assessed quite realistically as a (cloaked as an offer of support) maneuver to induce the "Vygotsky-Luria-group" to unmask themselves in writing on their own behalf an article for the leading theoretical-ideological journal *Pod znamenem marksizma [Under the Banner of Marxism]*, of which Mitin was the chief editor.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. van der Veer 2000, pp. 5 and 6. As it seems, the actual point of contact (better: stumbling-block) was the missing 'political correctness' of the results of Luria's psychological expeditions to Uzbekistan realized in 1931 and 1932, in the course of which it should be clarified what had been the "psychological" effects of the societal transformations realized during the bygone ten years, especially if and how the general alphabetization and the mechanization of the agriculture have had an influence on the form of thinking of the people living in this Central-Asian part of the Soviet Union (cf. van der Veer *ibid.*, and van der Veer & Valsiner 1991, pp. 253 ff.).

<sup>44</sup> From the *Soviet Historical Encyclopedia* (1973-1982) we learn that this journal appeared from 1932 until 1940, i.e., in a period of 9 years, with 108 issues. Thus, it was a monthly journal, so that we can take it for granted that the respective No. 4 was released in April, that is, still during Vygotsky's life-time.

Vygotsky there were missing the references to the concept of means of production and other important concepts of communist “Weltanschauung.” A criticism, that now was extended by Razmylov, who based his arguments on pertinent statements of Marx and Engels, by trying to prove that Vygotsky’s key idea about the genesis of human consciousness, i.e., generally speaking, the “higher psychological functions” from social interaction<sup>45</sup> were wrong and biased to the “sociological thought of the neopositivists,” respectively “neopositivist sociologists, such as Durkheim” (cf. Razmyslov 1934, p. 80 f., resp. Razmyslov 2000, p. 48f.), whereas the throughout application of a “foggy” concept of collective in Vygotsky’s “books on pedology” (loci citati, p. 81, resp. p. 49) were of great weight in a particular negative manner:

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 societal production [obshchestvenno-proizvodstvennuiu praktiku], 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. (quoted after Razmyslov 2000, p. 49; clarifying correction, signaled by the insertion in brackets, after Razmyslov 1934, p. 81)

With all that, Razmyzlov was busy to prove that Vygotsky and Luria ‘at all times from the beginning’ and not only in the elaboration of their “cultural-historical theory” had held ideologically dubious positions, for what reason he quoted as sources of reference passages from the earliest publications of the both of them, that is from works that had been written in the beginning and the middle of the 1920s. Thus, Luria was reproached with his in 1925 still overtly articulated sympathy for psychoanalysis (loci citati, pp. 78 f., resp. pp. 45 f.), whereas Vygotsky was charged with his early “reflexological” views (loci citati, p. 79, resp. p. 46). In this “retrospective”, remarkably much space was occupied by a critique of Vygotsky’s textbook *Pedagogical psychology. Short course [Pedagogicheskaiia psikhologiia. Kratkii kurs]*, written in 1923/24 but published only in 1926 (cf. loci citati, pp. 84 f., resp. pp. 54 ff.).

Merely the fact, that Razmyzlov in his all-round attack referred to a text of Vygotsky that had been written before the latter’s official entry into institutionalized psychology, whereby Razmyslov connected this reference with the indication that “Vygotsky never extricated himself from his ‘left-wing [levatskikh]’ mistakes later on” (loci citati, p. 85, resp. p. 56), sufficiently shows that the dispute about the research approach developed by the “Vygotsky-Luria-group” and the in the frame of this approach achieved results had now definitely turned into an exclusively political enterprise. A differentiated survey of Vygotsky’s conceptions, orientated by scientific criteria was not en vogue at all, rather, it could only have disturbing effects on the course towards the goal of proving the ideological untrustworthiness of the protagonists of the “cultural-historical” approach and to discredit them as being “objectively conduits for bourgeois influence on the proletariat” (loci

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<sup>45</sup> Referring to “many passages in his [Vygotsky’s] works,” Razmylov presents (without mentioning the source) the following quasi-quotation: “Observation of the development of higher psychological functions [vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii] shows that the construction [postroenie] of each of them is rigorously governed by one and the same law, that each higher psychological function [vysshaiia psikhologicheskaiia funktsiia] appears on the stage [na stsene] 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 [kategoriiia intersikhologicheskaiia], and then, second, as a mode of the child’s individual behavior, as a means of personal [lichnogo] adaptation, as an internal process of behavior, i.e., as an intrapsychological category [kategoriiia intrapsikhologicheskaiia].” (quoted after Razmyslov 2000, p. 49; for the original Russian version cf. Razmyslov 1934, p. 80) In Vygotsky we find the whole passage in almost identical wording in his article “The collective as a factor of the development of the anomalous child,” and also with the introductory statement, that on the basis of his own work and work of his collaborators he had “elsewhere formulated this proposition in the following way: ...” (quoted after *Coll. works*, Vol. 2, p. 192)



citati, p. 86, resp. p. 57), and that, even worse, their “pseudoscientific, reactionary, anti-Marxist and anticlass theory” in practice would lead to “anti-Soviet” consequences (loci. citati, p. 83, resp. p. 54).

## 6. Constancy and changes in the autochthonous terminology in the period of 1934 to 1936

It is of utmost importance for our concern to indicate a document that was published shortly after Vygotsky’s death within the official report on the 1<sup>st</sup> All-Ukraine Congress of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists in June of 1934 – a document, proving that Vygotsky has stuck until his death to the very denomination of his own conception, which he had chosen already in 1930. Thus, we can read in his paper of major points, submitted to the organizing committee of the congress under the title “Psychology and the teaching on localization,” that according to his belief “a system of psychological analysis, adequate from the viewpoint of the teaching on localization, must be based on the *historical theory of the higher psychological functions* [istoricheskoi teorii visshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii], which is grounded on a theory of the systemic and semantic structure of human consciousness [soznaniia cheloveka]” (Vygotskii 1934a, 36; transl., insertion in brackets, and italics P.K.). Just so important as the existence of this document is the fact, that Vygotsky, as we know from his postcard to Leontiev, dated 10<sup>th</sup> of May of 1934, had entrusted Leontiev with handing over his paper of major points to the organizing committee (cf. A.A. Leontiev 2005, pp. 45, 46; Puzyrei/Vygotsky 2007, pp. 49, 60), so that Leontiev beyond doubt had knowledge about its contents.

Hence it is noteworthy, that the latter in his official obituary for Vygotsky, published in the journal *Soviet Psychoneurology* [*Sovetskaia psikhonevrologiia*] in November/December of 1934<sup>46</sup>, neither reproduces the denomination, that Vygotsky had used in his theses for the congress, nor is using the shortened form “cultural-historical theory” that had been introduced *ex officio* by Razmyslov. Instead, he is offering a new, and in this length never used before variant of denomination, applicable to “the entire psychological theory” developed by Vygotsky: “the theory of the *societal-historical* (‘cultural’ – in contradistinction to ‘natural’, according to the laws of nature [‘naturному’, estestvenному]) development of man’s psyche” (cf. Leont’ev 1934, p. 188; respectively Leont’ev 2003c, p. 242; transl. P.K.).

In fact, it will be only one and a half year later, that Leontiev, who at that time has come himself into the focus of inquisition, in his (in those days not published) “Materials about consciousness [Materialy o soznanii]”<sup>47</sup> will accept the shortened form “*cultural-historical theory* [kul’turno-istoricheskaiia teoriia]” as label for Vygotsky’s ideas and at the same time keep his distance from these ideas, qualifying them as “not sustainable from the historical and philosophical point of view” (Leont’ev 2003d, p. 366; transl. P.K.).<sup>48</sup>

If, for sake of comparison, we draw upon A.R. Luria’s obituary, that was published in March of 1935 in parallel in two slightly different versions in *Character and Personality* (Luria

<sup>46</sup> According to A.A. Leont’ev, the obituary was “written by Leontiev in July” (A.A. Leontiev 2005, p. 53; italics P.K.).

<sup>47</sup> For the dating-criteria cf. Keiler 2010b.

<sup>48</sup> N.B.: Some 40 years later, in his introduction to the first volume of *Sobranie sochinenii* (“The creative path of L.S. Vygotsky”), Leontiev will explicitly admit his “identification with the aggressor” (by stealth realized as early as 1936) as follows: “It must be said that several psychologists of the 1930s (e.g. Talankin, Razmyslov, and others) had already seen and noted this genuine weakness in the conception of the connection between consciousness and real life which manifested itself in the cultural-historical theory.” (quoted after *Coll. works, Vol. 3*, p. 31) Cf. van der Veer’s comment on this “rather sinister remark” (loc. cit., p. 373, note [25]).

1934/35) and the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* (Luria 1935)<sup>49</sup>, we have to notice that the author, not being chary of appraisals of the highest category<sup>50</sup>, is managing to avoid any labeling.

Thus, Luria reports that Vygotsky “created a new school with a large number of followers all over the country” (1935, p. 224), that “modern science is indebted to him for his work on the *genesis of the psychological functions of the child*,” that according to Vygotsky, “the determining factor in the psychological development of the child and in the creation of the complex mechanism of the psyche is the *social development of the child*” (ibid.), that “in a number of papers on his experiments, which have now become classical in Russian psychology,” Vygotsky “described some of those mechanisms, social by *nature*<sup>51</sup> and indirect by their structure” (loc. cit., pp. 224 f.), that he

showed that the development of the psychological functions of the child is bound up with a deep change in the mind, with the development of new and intricate relations between the psychical [sic] functions and with the genesis of *new functional systems* (loc. cit., p. 225).

Furthermore, that

in the light of that theory Vygotsky analysed the origin of such complex psychological functions as logical memory, active attention, will, speech, thought, and character, being the first psychologist to introduce the historical method<sup>52</sup> in the experimental study of these important problems of human activity (ibid.).

And finally, that

(Vygotsky,) having begun with the development of the mental functions, worked out his theory about the *meaningful construction of human consciousness, taken as the product of the historical development of the mental functions* (ibid.).

Indeed, a lot of detailed and interesting (though not in all instances correct)<sup>53</sup> information – but the “new school,” created by Vygotsky, stays nameless as well as the mentioned “theory” which later reappears once again in the wording “his theory” (cf. ibid.).

It is the same with Luria’s study on the “development of mental functions in twins,” which was published two years later in *Character and Personality*. Here we find all the catchwords and phrases, which are characteristic of Vygotsky’s theory of the cultural development of the higher psychological functions (cf. Luria 1936/37, pp. 35 ff.), and we even find itemized the whole literature, necessary for a better understanding (cf. ibid., footnote 1) – but again, Luria does without calling this theory by name. That is, he is neither referring to one of the variants of denomination Vygotsky and/or Leontiev had used, nor is he applying one of those labels, which the critics had used since 1931, he rather avoids at all an identification of his own position (which is congruent

<sup>49</sup> This version, being somewhat more extensive, will be used in the following as primary source of reference.

<sup>50</sup> It is worthwhile to compare Leont’ev’s and Luria’s obituaries also under *this* aspect, but that would make up another story (cf. Keiler 2002, pp. 352 ff.; and Keiler 2010a, pp. 14 ff.).

<sup>51</sup> To anticipate misinterpretations: In this context “social” does not mean “societal,” and “nature” is the equivalent for “essence,” “character.”

<sup>52</sup> The 1934/35-version puts “‘developmental’ method” instead of “historical method” (cf. p. 239).

<sup>53</sup> Thus, in the beginning of the obituary Luria states, that Vygotsky „died ... at the age of 38” (1935, p. 224; the 1934/35-version, p. 238, puts “thirty-eight”) – a false report, which later in the secondary literature will be repeated over and over again (N.B.: Leont’ev had given in his obituary the same false report with a slight variation: “in the 39<sup>th</sup> year of his life [na 39 rodu jisni]” [cf. Leont’ev 1934, p. 190]). And Luria’s declaration, that Vygotsky had been the “most prominent soviet psychologist” (cf. 1935, p. 224) or “leading Russian psychologist” (cf. 1934/35, p. 238), whose papers, in 1934/35, had “become classical in Russian psychology,” is, mildly spoken, a “charming exaggeration,” seeming pardonable in the actual context but being absolutely misleading on the long run, having served as “reliable source” of many of the later myths and legends about Vygotsky and his “school”.

with that of Vygotsky at the level of general ideas but not so at the terminological level)<sup>54</sup> by any name whatsoever.

## 7. The terminology of the “Report on a conference of psychologists in the editorial office of the journal ‘Under the Banner of Marxism’” (1936)

Whereas Luria in regard to the denomination of the conceptions in question seems to be still unsettled, Leontiev, as is documented in his “Materials about consciousness,” already has accepted the depreciatory label “cultural-historical theory” as apt for Vygotsky’s conceptions, when, still in the first half of 1936, the great “show down” is taking place, and he together with Luria, L. Zankov, and D. Èl’konin is subjected to an interrogation, coming to pass on occasion of the notorious “conference of psychologists at the editorial office of the journal ‘Under the Banner of Marxism [Pod znamenem marksizma]’” – a “conference,” organized and realized in the forefield of the “Pedology-decree”<sup>55</sup> under the chairmanship of M.B. Mitin.

Elaborated by a certain “G.F.” and published in *Pod znamenem marksizma* in the September issue of the year 1936, the report on the afore said “conference”<sup>56</sup> gives a critical account of the “state of affairs and the tasks of the psychological science in the USSR,” discussing one by one all the at that time still existing psychological currents, thus, also assessing the conceptions and activities of the “Vygotsky-Luria-group”:

Another psychological current [napravlenie], which is “in fashion [imeet khojdenie]” (...) and requires an expanded Marxist critique, is the current Vygotsky – Luria. This schoolie [shkolka], camouflaging itself with quotations from the classical writers of Marxism-Leninism, de facto is importing non-Marxist theories into Soviet psychology. This schoolie until now has not been duly criticized and still needs to be unmasked. Its representatives: Luria (Medical-genetical institute), Leontiev (Higher communist institute for people’s education), Zankov (Institute for experimental defectology), Èl’konin (Leningrad pedological institute), and others – are unfolding a great activity [aktivnost’] in defense of this so called cultural-historical theory [tak nazivaemoi kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii]. As it is well known, the cultural-historical conception [kul’turno-istoricheskaiia kontseptsiiia] has

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<sup>54</sup> Already in the context of his early methodological appointment “that the subject of psychology is the integral psychophysiological process of behavior [tselostnii psikhofiziologicheskii protsess povedeniia],” which “cannot find full and adequate expression in just the mental part [psikhicheskoi chasti]” (cf. *Coll. works*, Vol. 3, p. 116), Vygotsky “in a unique [svoeobrazno] but principal [principalno] way” had made “a distinction between psychical [psikhicheskii] and psychological [psikhologicheskii] processes” (Brushlinskii 1968, p. 5, footnote; transl. P.K.). And, based on that (likewise conceptually as terminologically significant) distinction, from the introduction of the term in 1928 until the end of his life, he consequently used the form “*psychological* functions” (with the later specifications “higher” and “natural” or “elementary”). On the other hand, Luria seems to treat the terms “psychical functions” and “psychological functions” as synonyms, the use of which is a more stylistic than conceptual problem, leaving the question open, if the variant “mental functions” means the same as “psychical functions [psikhicheskii funktsii]” or if it corresponds to the Russian term “umstvennoe funktsii” (in German: “geistige Funktionen”), the English term having both meanings. This terminological inconsistency is especially noticeable in the “summary” of the study about the “development of mental functions in twins” (loc. cit., pp. 46 f.), where we have four times “psychological functions” and twice “higher mental functions.” Thus, it fits well in the picture, that Luria in one place is talking about “complex psychological processes” and in another about “elementary mental processes” (cf. loc. cit., p. 46).

<sup>55</sup> Properly: “Resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the pedological distortions in the system of the People’s Commissariat of Education.”

<sup>56</sup> To get it straight once for all: The in the secondary literature over and over again repeated date of this conference as having taken place “shortly after the release of the decree” (cf. f. i. Rückriem 2001, p. 412) or “immediately after the decree was issued” (A.A. Leontiev 2005, 60) is *evidently wrong*. In fact, we can read at the end of “G.F.’s” report: “This is a short survey of the conference which took place at the editorial board of the journal. How much the time was ripe for that, is testified by the fact that *after the conference events of outstanding significance came to pass at the pedagogical front*. We have in mind the historical resolution of the Central Committee from the 4<sup>th</sup> of June on the ‘pedological distortions in the system of the People’s Commissariat of Education.’” (quoted after „G.F.” 1936, p. 98; transl. and italics P.K. – N.B.: the correct date of the resolution was 4<sup>th</sup> of July.).

achieved its most complete development in the works [trudakh] of prof. Vygotsky, especially in his opus [rabote] “Thinking and speech.” The essence of this conception boils down to the assertion that the development of speech, of thinking, and of all other psychical functions [psikhicheskikh funktsii] depends on the functional use of the sign as the decisive and fundamental moment that is organizing the whole psychical activity [psikhicheskuiu deiatel’nost’] of the individual. The sign, which in complete alienation from the productive activity of men [v polnom otryve ot proizvodstvennoi deiatel’nosti liudei] is becoming the source and driving force of the development of man’s psyche [psikhiki cheloveka], takes on an overtly mystic character. (G.F. 1936, p. 92; transl., insertions in brackets, and omissions in parentheses P.K.)

With all that, according to “G.F.,” the “methodological error of such conception” lies in that

the author is conceiving the human psyche [chelovecheskuiu psikhiku] as an immanently developing process, beyond the relationships of social classes, beyond men’s productive activity. As the mechanists don’t understand that the internal contradictions are the source of automotion, as they are taking for absolut the external side of the developmental process, the representatives of the cultural-historical school [kul’turno-istoricheskoi shkoly] are taking for absolut the inner side of development and oppose it to the external side. The cultural-historical school in psychology [Kul’turno-istoricheskaiia shkola v psikhologii] has its roots in the philosophy of subjective idealism. Its representatives (...) don’t conceive the psychical functions [psikhicheskii funktsii] as unified [edinyi] complicated dialectical process of the reflection of the objective reality in human consciousness, but as a process of domination [ovladiiia] of the individual’s inner psychical functions [vnutrennimi psikhicheskimi funktsiiami] by the individual. Prof. Vygotsky has not understood the determining role of the productive activity in the formation, in the genesis of speech and thinking of men. (loc. cit., p. 93; transl., insertions in brackets, and omissions in parentheses P.K.)

As final conclusion then the assessment:

This theory of prof. Vygotsky must be criticized very severely – as an idealist, anti-Marxist theory in psychology, doing much harm to practice. (loc. cit., p. 94; transl. P.K.)

Subsequently to this assessment of Vygotsky’s conceptions, the ominous “G.F.” (who by A.A. Leontiev is identified as a certain F.I. Georgiev [cf. A.A. Leontiev 2005, p. 60]) reports on the interrogations of Leontiev and Luria, realized at the “conference,” and gives the following résumé:

Professor Leontiev, as one of the representatives of the cultural-historical theory [kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii], considered it unnecessary to criticize his own theoretical conception, to disclose concrete mistakes of his work. His behavior is a typical example of how not to act in respect to the most important questions of the psychological front. (loc. cit., p. 94; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.)

And in regard to Luria we can read:

It has to be said that prof. Luria as a representative of the cultural-historical theory [kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii] likewise considered it unnecessary to criticize at the conference his own erroneous theoretical conception. In his works as well as in his presentation at the conference, prof. Luria in his considerations of the child’s development and learning is proceeding from the idea that the sign is the determining factor in the development of the child’s psychical activity [psikhicheskoi deiatel’nosti]. (ibid.; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.)

It would be of little use (and by all means ‘a little bit late’) to give here a counter-assessment of “G.F.’s” characterization of Vygotsky’s views (essentially only reproducing and summing up in a compact and easy to use manner the reproaches that had been uttered already by former critics) – at any rate, his “report on a conference of psychologists at the editorial office of the journal ‘Pod

znamenem marksizma’,” published in September 1936 and after that accessible to everybody at any time, has to be qualified as the virtual birth certificate of the myth of *the* “cultural-historical school” and the by all representatives of that “school” unanimously shared and propagated “cultural-historical theory,” having achieved its “most complete development” in Vygotsky’s book *Thinking and speech* (thus *Thinking and speech*, as it were, declared the “manifesto” of *the* “cultural-historical” approach).<sup>57</sup> In addition, the ‘official’ (mainstream) terminology applied by “G.F.” to Vygotsky’s conceptions and topics of research would serve as a warrant to negate Vygotsky’s own non-interchangeable terminology, having the effect that thereafter will not be used anymore the wording “(higher) *psychological* functions” but instead “(higher) *psychical* functions” whenever Vygotsky’s research and theorizing is talked about (thus f. i. already in Rudneva 1937; Lurii & Leont’ev 1940; Rubinshtein 1940; Rubinshtein 1946)<sup>58</sup>, whereas occasional reminders, that it should be correctly “*psychological* functions” (cf. Brushlinskii 1968, p. 5; Iaroshevskii & Gurgendize 1982, p. 441, and the subject indices in Vygotskii 1956, p. 515 and *Sobr. soch.*, tom 1, 479) will appear as mere epiphenomenons, having no consequences at all. At all this, the influence of the by “G.F.” established ‘standards’ on the subsequent discourses was all the more enduring as they worked, so to speak, “subterraneously,” the “report” being a source which, as it seems, for a long time was frankly used but the existence of which usually was not mentioned, thus “G.F.’s” distortions of Vygotsky’s conceptions neither being subjected to overt counter-criticism or refutation (cf. f. i. Lurii & Leont’ev 1940; Leont’ev & Lurii 1956; Leont’ev, Lurii & Teplov 1960; Leont’ev 1967; Leontiev & Luria 1968; Leont’ev 1982).

## **8. Résumé of the hitherto recorded findings and survey of the development of the discourse after the “rediscovery” of Vygotsky in 1956**

Summing up, it can be said that, *according to first order sources*, the very Vygotsky has subsumed his own conceptions under the following designations: **1929** “[nstrumental] P[sychology],” “cultural psychology” (cf. letters to Leontiev from April and July of the year); **1930** “historical theory of the higher psychological functions [istoricheskaiia teoriia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]” (cf. foreword to Leontiev’s book *The development of memory* [subtitle: “Experimental investigation of the higher psychological functions”]); **1930/31** “theory of the development of the higher psychological functions [teoriia razvitiia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]” (cf. survey of the contents of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Pedology of the adolescent*); **1931/32** “conception of the historical development of the higher psychological functions [kontsepsiia istoricheskogo razvitiia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii],” “the so called [tak nazyvaemaia] theory of the historical (or cultural-historical) development in psychology [teoriia istoricheskogo (ili kul’turno-istoricheskogo) razvitiia v psikhologii],” “theory of the higher psychological functions [teoriia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii] (logical memory, voluntary attention, speech-thinking [rechevoe myshlenie], volitional processes, etc.)” (cf. the self-critical enclosure to Leontiev’s book, signed also by the latter); **1934** (shortly before Vygotsky’s decease) “historical theory of the higher psychological functions [istoricheskaiia teoriia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii]” (cf. paper of major points, entitled “Psychology and the teaching on localization,” elaborated for the 1<sup>st</sup> All-Ukraine Congress of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists).

<sup>57</sup> The “sacred” status of this posthumously and under dubious circumstances compiled opus, commonly celebrated as Vygotsky’s “legacy,” has been elsewhere challenged in detail by the present author (cf. Keiler 2002, pp. 177 f., 339-342).

<sup>58</sup> N.B.: Still in 1935 (i.e., after Razmylov’s criticism of Vygotsky but before “G.F.’s” report), S.L. Rubinshtein had written in his *Osnovy psikhologii [Fundamentals of psychology]*: „An important place in Soviet psychology belongs to Vygotsky, who together with Lurie [Lur’e], Leontiev and others elaborated *the theory of the cultural development* of the higher psychological functions [teoriiu kulturnogo razvitiia vysshikh psikhologicheskikh funktsii], the erroneousness of which has been repeatedly disclosed in the press.” (loc. cit., p. 37; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.)

Thus, the “core” of a correct denomination of Vygotsky’s theoretical approach, which with general validity can be ‘glued’ as a label on *all variants* of this approach between 1928 and 1934, is “*theory of the higher psych o l o g i c a l functions.*” But this generally valid labeling in every concrete case needs a specification, according to the respective subject of investigation or the specific accentuation characteristic of the respective investigation. Thus, the conception, guiding Vygotsky’s patho-psychological research in the last period of his life, could be specified as “theory about the *disintegration* of the higher psychological functions,” whereas the original version (1928-30) should be characterized as “instrumentalistic.”

The in the literature passed on label “cultural-historical theory [kul’turnogo-istoricheskaiia teoriia],” being, linguistically seen, a *solecism* (cf. above, footnote 30), has been introduced in the mid 1930s by adversaries of Vygotsky (Razmyslov 1934; “G.F.” 1936) with the defamatory purpose, to impute to the “Vygotsky-Luria-group” (by “G.F.” then declared “cultural-historical school”) an affinity to any (not identified by their names) representatives of German “Kulturpsychologie” (cf. Leont’ev, Luriiia & Teplov 1960, p. 3), incriminating the “cultural-historical” approach in the same breath with the most gruesome political-ideological failures. In 1956, the year of the XX<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPUSSR and at the same time the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vygotsky, this label then was declared quasi-sacrosanct by Leontiev and Luria, who in their introduction to Vygotsky’s *Selected psychological investigations [Izbrannye psikhologicheskie issledovaniia]* (the publication of which was the starting shot for the official “rediscovery” of Vygotsky)<sup>59</sup>, seeking refuge in attack, made the wrong but momentous assertion, that *Vygotsky himself* had “originally designated his psychological conception as cultural-historical theory of the psyche [pervonachal’no nazyval svoiu psikhologicheskuiu kontseptsiiu kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii psikhiki]” (cf. Leont’ev & Luriiia 1956, p. 7, transl. P.K.)<sup>60</sup>.

Indeed, in the following years there were several attempts to introduce (or reanimate) other denominations, such as “theory of cultural-historical development” (Leont’ev 1959), “theory of cultural development” (Leont’ev, Luriiia & Teplov 1960), “theory of the development of the higher psychical functions [teoriia razvitiia vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]” (Leont’ev, Luriiia & Teplov 1960; Petrovskii 1967a)<sup>61</sup>, “theory of the historical development of the higher psychical functions” (Petrovskii 1967b), “theory of the higher psychical functions” (Brushlinski 1967), “cultural-historical theory of the ‘higher’ psychical functions [kul’turnogo-istoricheskaiia teoriia ,vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]” (Brushlinski 1968<sup>62</sup>; Budilova 1972 [“higher” not in quotation marks]), “teaching [uchenie] on the development of the higher psychical functions” (Budilova 1972) – but none of these variants won recognition in the general discourse, just as little as the designation, that Rubinshtein had used in both editions of his textbook *Fundamentals of general psychology [Osnovy obshchei psikhologii]*, and which came closest to the autochthonous terminology: “theory of the cultural development of the higher psychical functions [teoriia kultur’nogo razvitiia vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]” (cf. Rubinshtein 1940, pp. 69 f.; Rubinshtein 1946, pp. 102 f.). – By all this, the fact, that the Rubinshtein-variant has been completely disregarded, as well as the attempt of first Brushlinsky and later Budilova to introduce the “hybrid”-version “cultural-historical theory of the higher psychical functions,” can be assessed as a symptom, that already in the end of the 1960s,

<sup>59</sup> See for that also V.N. Kolbanovsky’s supporting article “On the psychological views of L.S. Vygotsky (on occasion of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday),” published in October 1956 in *Voprosy psikhologii*.

<sup>60</sup> This assertion marking, so to speak, the second phase of the symptom-formation, whereas the virtual “identification with the aggressor” already had been realized by Leontiev in 1936 in his “Materials about consciousness,” being confirmed four years later within Luria and Leontiev’s catchword-article “Psychology” in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (cf. below, footnote 63).

<sup>61</sup> The use of italics here indicates the fact of a deviation from the authentic terminology of Vygotsky, which, taken strictly, is also a conceptual deviation (cf. above, footnote 54).

<sup>62</sup> N.B.: Brushlinsky knew very well that it should be “properly psych o l o g i c a l [tochnee, psikhologicheskikh] functions” (loc. cit., p. 5; transl. and spaced type P.K.), but declared that “in the given context” (i.e., the critical discussion of Vygotsky’s theory of thinking) this could “be neglected” (cf. *ibid.*, footn.; transl. P.K.).

beginning of the 1970s not only the struggle for the hegemony in Soviet psychology but even the struggle for the mere preservation of Rubinshtein's legacy (which despite all divergencies with Vygotsky's conceptions even "in the very hard times" allways included an appreciation of his merits)<sup>63</sup> had turned out in disfavor for the "Rubinshteinians."

On the other hand, it is quite conspicuous that the topoi "cultural-historical theory" and "cultural-historical school" are neither used by Luria in his afterword to the second volume of the Russian Vygotsky-work-edition, nor by D.B. Èl'konin in his afterword to the fourth volume, nor by

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<sup>63</sup> See above all the *Fundamentals of general psychology [Osnovy obshchei psikhologii]*, published first in 1940, and in a revised edition in 1946 (in German in 1958ff). Here, in the first edition's author index, Vygotsky among the Russian authors, together with I.P. Pavlov, is ranking second in the number of mentions (both with 16 mentions), only "beaten" by V.I. Lenin (25 mentions) (cf. Rubinshtein 1940, pp. 589, 591). In the author index of the second edition (German version, Rubinshtein 1977, pp. 860-865), he, indeed, is ranking with "only" 13 mentions far behind Pavlov (23 mentions) and Lenin (now only 19 mentions!), having even lost the third rank to I.M. Sechenov (15 mentions), who in the first edition had only 6 mentions – but among the colleagues in the more strict sense he is still ranking first (the second being P.P. Blonskii with 7 mentions). When the indicated pages are checked, it has to be stated that Rubinshtein in the most cases is not merely mentioning Vygotsky but is really presenting his conceptions, often discussing them in detail, partly criticizing, partly approving them. No surprise after all, to find Vygotsky also included in the (thematically organized) bibliography.

It is of special interest for our concern, that Rubinshtein in the chapter on the history of Soviet psychology first mentions "Vygotsky's theory of cultural development" (cf. Rubinshtein 1940, p. 67; 1946, p. 101) and then, only a little bit later, is dedicating a quite extensive discussion to "the 'theory of the cultural development of the higher psychical functions [teoriia kul'turnogo razvitiia vysshikh psikhicheskikh funcii]," elaborated by L.S. Vygotsky and a group of collaborators" (1940, pp. 69 f.; 1946, pp. 102 f.; transl. P.K.). Indeed, in the second edition this discussion does not result as exhaustive as in the first (only 18 lines compared to 30 lines by 75 signs each), but it has still the same length as the paragraph, dedicated to "Vygotsky and his collaborators," within the catchword-article "Psychology," elaborated by Luria and Leontiev for volume 47 of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia [Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Èntsiklopediia]* (cf. Luria & Leont'ev 1940, column 525). And looked at it as a whole, even Rubinshtein's 1946 version results more positive than the characteristic given by Vygotsky's former most "intimate" colleagues. Certainly, Rubinshtein reproduces the objection, already uttered in the early 1930s, that the "theory of cultural development" is starting from "wrong methodological preconditions" by opposing "dualistically the 'cultural' development to the 'natural'" and is conceiving "development as genetic sociologism" – but at the same time he is conceding a "certain positive meaning" to its "basic tendency to introduce the idea of development and the historical principle into psychology," and calls the "genetic and historical tendencies of the theory of the cultural development of the higher psychical functions" a "progress" (cf. Rubinshtein 1946, p. 102; transl. P.K.). Not so Luria and Leontiev. After having reported in 20 column-lines on the most important fields of research of "L.S. Vygotsky (1896-1934) and his collaborators" (whereby they too don't use the authentic terminology of Vygotsky but speak of "higher psychical processes in man [vysshie psikhicheskie protsessy cheloveka]" and the "decomposition of the higher psychical functions [raspada vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]"), they dedicate the remaining 10 lines (i.e., a third of the paragraph) to a fundamental critique, not relativized by any mitigation whatsoever: "However, in these studies [rabotakh] the process of psychical development [protsess psikhicheskogo razvitiia] was conceived beyond the connection with the development of practical activity and was deduced directly from the fact of man's assimilation [ovladieniia] of ideal [ideal'nymi in the sense of "spiritual"] products (speech, concepts), created by human society. At the same time these studies adopted uncritically a number of erroneous idealist and mechanistic principles from bourgeois psychology." (Luria & Leont'ev 1940, column 525; transl. and insertions in brackets P.K.)

After all, it is a gruesome myth that in the aftermath of the "pedology-decree" from July 1936 "for all of two decades, Lev Semenovich and his works were under a writ of silence," that "they could not be mentioned or referred to for 20 long years," as Gita Vygodskaia, Vygotsky's daughter, writes (cf. Vygodskaia & Lifanova 1999d, p. 33), or that "Vygotsky's name was forbidden up until 1956," as it has been asserted for a long time by Leontiev's son A.A. Leontiev, who retracted this false testimony only in 2003 (cf. A.A. Leontiev 2005, p. 65). Characteristically, in that he did not refer to Rubinshtein and his pertinent (at least balanced if not plain positive) assessments in 1940 and 1946 but only admitted that there had been criticisms 'also from the own ranks,' trying to palliate this in the case of Luria and Leontiev (cf. loc. cit, p. 66), suppressing the fact that their criticism was close to that uttered by former critics (cf. f. i. "G.F."), and that they distorted Vygotsky's views the same way as the critics of the 1930s had done. Apparently, it was almost heresy only to alude to the fact that just Rubinshtein had been able to do, what others, much more authorized and obliged to keep alive a positive remembrance of Vygotsky in front of the public, either did not have the courage or the will to do. Irony of history: for the first edition of his *Fundamentals of general psychology* Rubinshtein even was awarded the Stalin-prize.

È.S. Bein, T.A. Vlasova, R.E. Levina, N.G. Morozova, and J.I. Shif in their afterword to the fifth volume<sup>64</sup>. Whereas Luria (who not only in 1956 but once more in 1968 had co-signed the assertion that Vygotsky *himself* had designated his conception as “cultural-historical theory”<sup>65</sup>) in his afterword only talks informally about “Vygotsky’s general psychological theory [obshchepsichologicheskoi teorii L.S. Vygot’skogo],” respectively “this general theory [toi obshchei teorii]” of Vygotsky (cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 2, p. 466), Èl’konin in one place uses the term “theory of development of the higher psychical functions [teorii razvitiia vysshich psikhicheskikh funktsii]” (*Sobr. soch.*, tom 4, p. 386) and in another speaks about the “theory of the higher psychical processes [teoriia vysshich psikhicheskikh protsessov]” (*Sobr. soch.*, tom 4, p. 393), and in Bein, Vlasova, Levina, Morozova, and Shif appears the wording “general psychological theory of the higher psychical functions [obshchei psikhologicheskoi teorii vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]” (*Sobr. soch.*, tom 5, p. 335). More than that: in Luria’s autobiography we even find completely restored the autochthonous terminology. Here, he first uses the denomination “his [i.e., Vygotsky’s] theory of the development of higher psychological functions in children” (Luria 1979, p. 126; insertion in brackets P.K.) and later talks about Vygotsky’s “general theory of the sociohistorical origins of higher psychological functions” (a.a.O., 156)<sup>66</sup>. Apparently, it was Leontiev, respectively the “Leontiev-group” within the “Vygotsky-Luria-Leontiev-school” (Davydov & Radzikhovskii 1985, p. 35) or “Vygotsky-Leontiev-Luria-school” (Zinchenko 1985, pp. 103, 104), who were responsible for the adoption and canonization of the allochthonous labeling (cf. Leont’ev

<sup>64</sup> The imprint of this volume indicates L.S. Slavina as reviewer, T.A. Vlasova, È.S. Bein, R.E. Levina, N.G. Morozova, and J.I. Shif as responsible for the compilation of the texts, and È.S. Bein, R.E. Levina, and N.G. Morozova as authors of the commentaries – all of them, the same as Luria and Èl’konin, former collaborators of Vygotsky.

<sup>65</sup> It was six years after the release of *Thought and language*, that Leontiev and Luria contributed to the omnibus volume *Historical roots of contemporary psychology*, edited by B.B. Wolman, a paper entitled “The psychological ideas of L.S. Vygot’skii” which, as the respective editorial footnote says, should appear as “an Introduction to *Selected Papers* of L.S. Vygot’skii to be published by Pergamon Press London” (cf. Leontiev & Luria 1968, p. 338, footn. 1).

Although nearly identical in its title with the 1956 introduction to the *Selected psychological investigations*, the paper is no completely identical reproduction. However, in regard to the passage of most interest for our concern, i.e., the assertion that Vygotsky *himself* had invented the denomination “cultural-historical theory,” there can be stated a perfect congruency: “That is why Vygot’skii originally called his psychological conception the *cultural-historical theory of the psyche*, contrasting it with the idealistic interpretation of mental processes viewed as intrinsic primordial properties of the spirit and with the naturalistic concepts that saw no difference between the behavior of an animal and the mental activity of man.” (loc. cit., pp. 341 f.; italics in the original) – Already one year ago, Leontiev had tried to justify the label “cultural-historical theory” as grounded in the very character of the conception itself, not noticing the evident solecism: “In the foreground there were placed the problem of the historicity of the psyche [istorizma psichiki], the problem of the reorganization [perestroiki] of the psyche under the influence of the creations of human culture (‘the cultural-historical theory of the development of the psyche [kul’turno-istoricheskaiia teoriia razvitiia psikhiki]).” (Leont’ev 1967, 18; transl. P.K.)

<sup>66</sup> To give an impression of “which way the cat jumps,” it has to be mentioned here, that Luria then was “corrected” by M. Cole in his “Portrait of Luria” (i.e., the epilogue to Luria’s autobiography). Cole first, referring to Frankel’s 1930-criticism of the *Studies in the history of behavior*, speaks of the “sociohistorical theory,” respectively the “sociohistorical approach to the study of psychological processes” (cf. Cole 1979, p. 209), then one page later he mentions the “first standard experimental techniques devised by the sociohistorical school” (loc. cit., p. 210), which then (again one page later) is called by him “hitherto [around 1929/30; P.K.] unnoticed Vygotskian school” (cf. p. 211), which three pages later, in the context of the report on Luria’s expedition to Central-Asia, advances to the “cultural-historical school” (cf. p. 214). Already at page 212 Cole had mentioned the “implications of the cultural-historical theory,” which is followed three pages later by a mention of the “criticism of the cultural-historical theory” (cf. p. 215). At page 216 we find *Luria’s* [“his”] “cultural-historical theory,” and one page later is quoted from the “report” of “G.F.,” where is referred to “Professor Luria, as one of the representatives of the cultural-historical theory” (cf. p. 217). And finally, another page later and with reference to Luria’s “conversion into a neuropsychologist” (taking place in the second half of the 1930s in consequence of the aftermath of “G.F.’s” report on Luria’s “uncooperative” behavior at the “conference of psychologists ...”), Cole states: “There is no doubt that from the beginning he viewed this activity as yet another extension of the cultural-historical theory into a new empirical domain” (p. 218). – As we can plainly see: “G.F.” is a more authoritative source of reference as the very Alexander Romanovich Luria himself.



1936/2003d; Zaporozjets 1959/1965; Leont'ev 1967; Leont'ev 1982; A.A. Leontiev 2005), which already in the end of the 1960s (by attributing to Vygotsky the function of a precursor first for Leontiev's "neo-cultural-historical" approach as represented in his *Problems of the development of the psyche*,<sup>67</sup> and later on for Leontiev's variant of "activity theory") began to lose its pejorative character (cf. for instance Leont'ev 1967; Iudin 1978; Davydov & Radzichovskii 1980a; 1980b; Leont'ev 1982), and finally in the 1970s, when "the concepts formulated by Vygotsky" had become "widely accepted," forming the "basis for the main school of Soviet psychology" (cf. Luria 1979, p. 52)<sup>68</sup>, advanced to a shibboleth with international acceptance – a tendency from which also the author of the present paper, firmly integrated in the genesis and the development of Critical Psychology from the very beginning until the end of the 1970s,<sup>69</sup> had no chance to escape.

## 9. Final conclusions

The commonly used label "cultural-historical theory [kul'turno-istoricheskaja teoriia]" is no "autochthonous" denomination for the theoretical conceptions developed by Vygotsky in the years 1927/28 until 1934 (the year of his decease) within the frame of a widespread cooperational network. That is, it was neither used by Vygotsky himself nor created in the sphere of cooperation with research workers directly associated with him in the various fields of his activity. Likewise, the designation "cultural-historical school [kul'turno-istoricheskaja shkola]" does not reflect the genuine self-concept of the respective researchers (that is Vygotsky and his more or less intimately associated colleagues). Rather, both denominations were originally introduced by critics in the middle of the 1930s as labels with defamatory connotations. Later on, within the scope of a defense-mechanism that psychoanalysts use to call "identification with the aggressor," these labels have first been only 'accepted' but finally, when in the aftermath of the "thaw"-period the once "beaten" turned out to be the "victorious" ones, were converted into commonly used shibboleths which (by repression of their disgraceful origin and a systematic falsification of their history) nowadays indeed seem to have lost completely their formerly negative connotations but, after all, are quite problematic in several aspects. Thus, the overall denomination "cultural-historical theory," besides of being a barbarism, does not reflect adequately neither the multi-variety of the 'universe' of Vygotsky's ideas nor the process of differentiation and the sometimes dramatic shifts that took place in the development of Vygotsky's theoretical conceptions in the period from 1927/28 until his last working phase in the spring of 1934. Just the same way problematic is the collective concept of "cultural-historical school" which in its vagueness serves the aims of mystification and therefore should be likewise abandoned as the misleading denomination "cultural-historical theory": First, being a collective concept, it gives space to arbitrariness in regard to who should be counted in and who not. By contrast, A. Yasnitsky (2010, p. 6) adequately speaks of a "huge network of protagonists," refers by full names, besides of Vygotsky, to 33 more women and men, finishing this enumeration with the formulation: "to mention but a few". Second, on the one hand idolizing the "leading heads" and on the other degrading the "rank and file" to mere supernumeraries (often banished into anonymity, sometimes being victims of a transmogrification of their names),<sup>70</sup> the

<sup>67</sup> Cf. the most instructive foreword to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Leont'ev 1965, p. 4).

<sup>68</sup> N.B.: Luria, here indeed, in "charming exaggeration," is referring to the (early) 1930s, glorifying the real state of affairs which was quite different (cf. van der Veer & Valsiner 1991). But taken as a quasi-quotation, this characterization would be absolutely adequate in regard to the late 1960s and the 1970s, when the "Leontiev-Luria-group" beyond doubt had established its hegemony in Soviet psychology (Leontiev had been honored for his *Problems of the development of the psyche* already in 1963 with the Lenin-prize, and Luria was awarded the Lomonossov-prize, fist class, in 1967) – a fact that had its long lasting effects also on how the discussion about Vygotsky was organized at the international stage.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. the introduction to this paper.

<sup>70</sup> As an example for this tendency may serve the bibliographical registration of a 40 pages long paper, entitled "The problem of dementia in Pick's disease [K voprosu o dementsii pri bolezni Pika]," which was published in June of

easy to use label “school” is systematically leveling the differences between the various scientists who collaborated with Vygotsky at different times, at different places, in the frame of different institutions, with different intensity and intimacy, and, not to forget, with different affinity to his ideas – differences, which consequently led to “competing research agendas of different groupings within the larger network of Vygotskian scholars” (Yasnitsky *ibid.* – for a more detailed discussion of the history of that network and the respective inter-group dynamics see Yasnitsky 2011b). Thus, as it is understood, a mystification by no means will be avoided by simply leaving behind the label “cultural-historical school” and using instead the label “Vygotsky-Leontiev-Luria-school” or the counter-variant “Vygotsky-Luria-Leontiev-school”.

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1934 in the medical journal *Sovetskaia nevroptologiiia, psikhiatriia, psikhogigiena [Soviet Neuropathology, Psychiatry, Psychohygiene]*, and the authors of which, according to the title page, were N.V. Samukhin, G.V. Birenbaum, and L.S. Vygotsky (cf. Samukhin, Birenbaum & Vygotskii 1934, 97). Even if we take for granted that the name of Vygotsky not only appeared for tactical reasons (i.e., to facilitate or accelerate the publication) but that he really had co-authored this paper (which through and through is obliged to the theoretical approach of K. Lewin), it is absolutely not correct to list it in the pertinent bibliographies as a work of *Vygotsky* with the addition “with.” But all the Vygotsky-bibliographies checked by the present author, beginning with the one at the end of the original version of *Thinking and speech* (cf. Vygotskii 1934b, p. 322) and ending with that of Vygotskaia & Lifanova [Shakhlevich] (2000, German version), do exactly this. But more than that: In the “collaborator's” rubric, in five out of seven times, we don't find Nikolai Samukhin mentioned first but Gita Birenbaum (cf. Shakhlevich 1974, 159; *Sobr. soch.*, tom 6, p. 375; Vygotskaia & Lifanova 1996, p. 407; Vygotskaia & Lifanova 1999d, p. 94; Vygotskaja & Lifanova 2000, p. 373), at that predominantly (exception: Shakhlevich 1974) “Germanized” to “Birnbaum” (“Birnbaum” is the German word for “pear-tree”), this making at least a sense and even seeming pardonable in the case of the German version of the Vygotsky-bibliography. But what about the transmogrification to “Berinbaum” (cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 6, p. 375) or the banishment into non-existence (cf. *Coll. works*, vol. 6, p. 298)?

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