

L.S. Vygotsky's "Tool and sign" as a "benign forgery": Introduction to virtual dialogue

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A series of articles that came out in the latest issue of our journal investigated L.S. Vygotsky's work that was first published in Russian under the title "Orudie i znak v razvitii rebenka" [Tool and sign in the development of the child] (Vygotskii, 1984). In these studies their authors questioned the origin of this Russian text and compared it with the text of English publication of the same work of Vygotsky that was first published in full in 1994 under the title "Tool and symbol in child development" (Vygotsky, 1994) in the collection of Vygotsky's works under the editorship of R. van der Veer and J. Valsiner (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). On the basis of the comparison of linguistic, stylistic, and structural characteristics of the text the authors came to radically opposite conclusions about the origin of these two texts, specifically, on the question in what direction translation was made: from Russian into English, or, as strange as it may appear, from English into Russian (Kellogg, 2011a, 2011b; Kellogg & Yasnitsky, 2011; Yasnitsky, 2011a, 2011b). A somewhat even more elaborate version of one of these studies. A paper titled "Orudie i znak v razvitii rebenka: Samaia izvestnaia rabota L.S. Vygotskogo, kotoruiu on nikogda ne pisal" [Tool and sign in the development of the child: The most famous Vygotsky's work, which he never wrote] will be published in the end of the year in Russian journal "Metodologiya i istoriya psikhologii" [Methodology and History of Psychology] (Yasnitsky, 2012).

Interestingly, after the publication of these studies in the end of last year one of the two rival interpretations quite unexpectedly was confirmed in an online publication that was discovered in a blog and signed by its author "Renatus". As of the end of July 2012, this entry is available online at the following URLs:

<http://pedsovet.org/forum/index.php?autocom=blog&blogid=74&showentry=17337> or

<http://pedsovet.org/forum/index.php?autocom=blog&blogid=74&showentry=7277>

The journal contacted major participants of this story for the comments on the events described in various accounts of the history of the preparations to publication of Vygotsky's work in Russian and English. Thus, these individuals somewhat spontaneously entered virtual dialogue, whose participants include:

- blogger Renatus, who personally gave his kind permission for republication of his blog entry, according to which "only an English version of the text was originally found in Vygotsky's archive";

- Elkhonon Goldberg, who was the first to publish the story of the translation of Vygotsky's work from English into Russian in the process of preparation of his collected works in late 1960s; in his book he described this episode as "benign forgery" (Goldberg, 2005, p. 99);

- Michael Cole, who was Luria's Moscow postdoc student in 1962 and, later, a translator and editor of a number of Luria's and Vygotsky's works that Luria shared with him in early 1970s for publication in the United States: among these works was a typescript English copy of an unpublished text of "Tool and sign" that was subsequently partly used for English publication and constituted virtually half of the text of "Mind in Society" (1978); then, roughly a decade later, this copy of the text was sent to René van der Veer for full-text publication in "The Vygotsky Reader" (1994);

- René van der Veer, co-editor of Vygotsky's collected works *The Vygotsky Reader* (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994) that was the first publication to notice the non-verbatim repetitions of segments of the Russian text in its Soviet publication of 1984.

We are deeply grateful to these authors for their contributions, which we publish in this issue of the journal. We believe this virtual dialogue will shed light on some mysteries of the "Tool and sign". However, there still are numerous questions to this story and the available texts of this Vygotsky's work, and we hope that future studies and, hopefully, archival discoveries, will clarify this most strange story. The journal wholeheartedly welcomes the continuation of this dialogue and calls for papers on this and related issues in the history, theory, methodology of Vygotsky's legacy, and textology of his works.

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