

Psychology destined for contemporary Russia

Dear colleagues!

On the 14th-17th September, 2007 we will hold the fourth congress of Russian Psychological Society “Psychology destined for contemporary Russia”. The principal tasks of the congress: conduct of scientific and education actions, summing up the results of the work of Russian psychologists during the last period and the search of the new reference points in their scientific and public activity. The work of the congress will be organized according to the following main lines: “Psychology destined for society”, “Psychology destined for personality”, “Psychology destined for State”, “Psychology is an ancient science with the new image”.

Until the beginning of the congress, Russian psychological journal proposes to readers a new column devoted to congress themes and ask Russian psychologists to express their opinion about the importance, role and functions of psychological science in contemporary society.

Development of fundamental research in psychology

The subject of contemporary psychological science is determined by principal changes that have occurred in human society in general and in Russian society specifically.

These changes is a hallmark of civilization demolition in reality, and they have qualitatively transformed all the sides of the human lives- demographic, ethno political, technological, social, economic, they have also dictated new cultural and historical situation of our being.

It is psychologically important that's the world became quite different,- it is open. The masses of people move freely, and people who live many kilometers away from each other, nevertheless they are placed in the same information space, but what really matters- the people of today think differently, assessing the world and themselves in it.

These changes in a person are the most significant among other critical changes in the world and society. We bear in mind changes in perception, consciousness, mentality, spheres of need and motivation and of will and emotion of a personality, his vital rhythm, space activity, relation structure, soul emotions, ethical and value aspects of being.

On the one hand, the pressing situation of human existence at present has stimulated development of critical mentality, creative initiatives, social responsibility. It is favorable to development of a man as a person.

On the other hand the alarming differentiation of society, a rise of separatism, fundamentalism, nationalism, instability of ecological, ideological, social and economic conditions, discrediting of many moral orientations, manipulation of consciousness through mass media cause disorientation of people and mass socio-psychological stress, which is reflected in spiritual and physical health.

“Each century, except ours, had an ideal,-wrote a famous American psychologist Abraham Maslow, - a saint, a hero, a gentleman, a knight, a mystic. But we only proposed a well adapted to circumstances person without problems- it is a very pale and ambiguous replacement.”

This ambiguous replacement is especially dangerous for growing people because the characteristic contradictions of development of children and youth have considerably increased at present and it causes an artificial delay of personal development, intensifies the growing of false needs, false interests, results in deviation of behavior, violation of mental life, elevated anxiety, aggression, important shift in interpersonal, intergroup relations.

For fairness' sake it is necessary to note that our scientists reacted quickly to a present situation adequate ways, the possibilities of keeping human qualities in a person.

However we don't take over the task in this report to analyze the psychological, psycho physiological and defectological studies done nowadays.

We are dealing with the prospects of scientific research directed at building fundamental-theoretical and experimental psychological studies of a man of today, his mental phenomena and processes, new norms of his mentality, psycho physiological, personal development, objectively stipulated by a gigantic leap that made society.

Today the problem of self-determination, comprehension, self-awareness who I am in this world – and closely linked to this problem, problems of identity and identification as a representative of a certain group, region, ethnos, country, contemporary human society.

The psychologists face such complicated questions as:

- What is the character of development of self-determination of growing people nowadays?
- What are the specific features of their consciousness?
- How do they change according to different ages and circumstances?
- Who or what do they identify with? (children, teenagers, youths, middle-aged people, they belong not only to different generations but different cultures and different social structures)

Fundamental research directed toward resolving this complex of problems requires collaborative efforts of psychologists, teachers, age physiologists, sociologists. We feel dire necessity of creation of new paradigm for psychological studies, new methods of analysis for arising complicated processes of development, self-development, self-determination and relations between people.

The problem of relations, their contents, mechanisms, structure expansion is the main objective of the psychology today.

First of all, it is a problem of relation of a person to himself and others, relations between people where, to our great regret, we observe the violation of many forms, lack of the most important feelings, even such ones as confidence and empathy.

How to guard, more accurately, how to restore real deep human feelings- personal qualities- it is a question addressed to specialists- psychologists who must intensify fundamental studies of relation system, interrelation of people that has got sharper especially today.

Naturally, among the problems of relations, interrelation of people “in a vertical position”: children-adults, young people- elder people are of basic importance. We think it is important to reveal the role of each generation, functional amount of work, values, stereotypes of behavior, which have changed and moved out of position.

Up till now the adults, changing with ages physically and socially, however were struck off the researches of psychologists and off the process of development in its socio-psychological meaning, off history of development of an individual as an active subject, development of his consciousness, self-awareness, including problems of unconsciousness, sub consciousness and over consciousness , personal qualities and particularities. This “closes” certain very important questions of ontogenesis.

Special attention should be paid to organizing psychological studies pointed toward the finding the basics and principles for concepts of multi-facet and multistage forms of development of interaction between adults and children.

This problem got intensified due to different circumstances, among which we can mention, on the one hand, growing estrangement between adults and children who have considerably become mature, on the other hand, their social infantilism has increased. It is interesting to note that children become mature very often at individual level locally not as a personality, not as a subject but regarding demonstrative behavior. Studies of this issue should be done in order to strengthen the continuity of generations. Nonetheless there is a danger, and it becomes stronger, of disintegration of all system of cultural and historical inheritance.

We do not speak about the problem “fathers and children” in their usual interpretation, we suggest the large socio-cultural aspect of interaction between generations.

Unfortunately, the problem of interaction (not only relations, but interaction) of children and grown-ups is not examined up till now to a proper extent, and we even think it is not set as a task at appropriate scientific level. On the one hand we find it extremely important to define the essence, content of position of Grown-ups’ World and Children’s World as specific subjects of interaction, on the other hand we should distinguish and reveal space (structure, character) of their interaction.

We emphasize that we don’t take under consideration the pressure of adults upon children, but their interaction and influence to each other, including the influence of children on grown-ups.

Beautiful lines of the poem written by Candidate of Technical Science , the poet from Voronezh Vladimir Semenovitch Ploutece could serve to illustrate our ideas:

*Нахожусь ли в предчувствии боя,
Осязаю ли отдыха миг,
Поверяю я, детство, тобою
Безупречность поступков своих.*

*Не покинь меня, детство, останься
Справедливости чистый сосуд,
Наиверховнейшая из инстанций,
Дел и совести праведный суд.*

In childhood we perceive a subtle difference between justice and injustice, truthfulness and mendacity, honesty and disgrace.

The author of the poem believes that we check all our acts according to notions formed in childhood. He is sure that people are very sincere in childhood and he compares this period of human life with a clean vessel.

The question how this consciousness, this children's comprehension develops, How personal position of a child is formed at different stages of childhood and what socio-psychological structures provide inner self-determination, distinct relation of a growing man to himself and encirclement, many other topics insistently require carrying out full-scale theoretical and experimental studies that let advance and substantiate new fruitful conceptions.

We also need to focus on the problem of penetrating into complicated interrelations between people, so called, "in a horizontal position": different social groups, structures, communities. Especially now when there is a tendency of exacerbation of contradictions all over the world, we can appreciate many-sided nature and extraordinary difficulty and at the same time weakly studied field of psychological characteristics , for example, of ethnic communities, their mutual penetration, on the one hand, and on the other hand- self-determination, their changing, aggravating interrelations, and also connected to all this problem of preventive treatment of ethnic phobia, xenophobia and education of tolerance.

Among their number, there is the task of elaboration of psychological and pedagogical foundation of formation of personal qualities consolidating the best features of a concrete ethnos, Russian people and human values.

I needn't to explain in your audience what role acquires fundamental psychological research directed to find the ways of modernization of education.

Here psychologists face, first of all, the necessity to reveal, in close cooperation with teachers and physiologists, of course, peculiarities and the law-governed nature of development of contemporary childhood, ascertaining disposition, dynamics, and intensity of changes giving rise to new characteristics.

For our purposes we'll have to determine the system of coordinates which limit and reports in depth processes in the space of childhood: physical and mental maturing, society admission, assimilation of social norms, roles, positions.

Today there is a pressing necessity in complex psychological and physiological

studies of the character and the stages of relationship of physiological and psychological aging in the process of ontogenesis. We should correct the periodization of Childhood as a scientific basis for improvement of educational system.

Psychologists are expected to propound new conceptions revealing the character and particularities of a complicated process of assimilation of knowledge be contemporary children in conditions of changes of knowledge space, the answers to the main questions about the character of its systematization, its level, width at different stages of learning, about possibilities of optimization of mental and speech activity of children, about particularities of their mastering of mental operations, activities, about reserves and conditions of development and goal-oriented formation of cognitive abilities, about psychological mechanism of understanding of different subjects, particularly, linguistic and mathematical literacy, apprehension of historical space.

Let us reveal and precise, for instance, some more specific questions:

- How to get acquainted in psychologically correct way teenagers with the works of Griboedov and Leo Tolstoy that they cannot realize at their present level?
- How to explain to a contemporary youth the historical events of XVIII, XIX, XX centuries? Do you remember that the interpretation of the events during the Second World War has greatly changed?
- How to keep the need of spiritual development, to improve aspirations at present ideological chaos?
- In our century called by a French psychologist Moscovici a century of the crowd, studying emotional state and power

potential how to distinguish possibilities of the young people and use them for their sake, preserving their individuality?

There are many similar questions destined to psychologists now.

It appears important along with the above mentioned questions, working out scientific psychological, psycho physiological and psychological and didactic basis of the derivation of up-to-date text-books, revealing their interrelation with new information technologies including Internet. We have to stipulate the influence of the text-book at present condition of globalization of information environment.

These are psychologists who are called to find the ways of combining stable educational material and their opinion about “supplies” of mass media, “supplies” of different quality and potential.

The problem of combining different schemas of information perception has grown at an accelerating pace: on the one hand there is information received from text-books and teachers, on the other hand, there is some information taken from large information flow consisting of transmissions and Internet sites that enlarge the space of meeting with virtual reality.

In this connection, the significance of experimental studies of psycho physiological mechanisms of cognitive activity at different stages of age development as theoretical foundation for creation of new methodological approaches to education and up-bringing has greatly increased.

The conception of Toffler O. has been substantiated today. He states that our world is on the way to postindustrial society where the productions of high energy and material capacity should be replaced by production of ideas and information (please note, that in the United States, for example, 60% of able-bodied population are occupied in the domain of information technologies, compare- only 3% of able-bodied population work in agriculture, in industry it is about 13%).

As this takes place, people are always late in their attitudes to changing, self-reproducing technical schemas; psychologists should carry out fundamental research, related to reveal possibilities of adjustment to new technical means of school children and students, and the selecting attitude toward information, the skill of range information in the process of knowledge acquirement.

Herewith it is necessary theoretically substantiate and experimentally check: How, where and what are the limits of computerization of learning. The work on computer must not reduce children’s enterprising spirit, must not destroy their creative imagination and simultaneously it must not take them away from reality.

It should contribute to development of qualities typical for active subjects.

Psychologists in close cooperation with specialists in educational methods are simply obliged to concentrate their studies on revealing surpassing abilities of growing people, conditions of development of their mobility in acquiring and comprehension of new technical and technological systems and contemporary level of society culture, in formation of cognitive needs, conditions and mechanisms of intellectual potential.

A contemporary man lives in new rhythm of life and work, in new temporary structures that change the mentality, its stability.

There are alterations, specifically, in communication modes and its principals, Spontaneous communication gives up place to telephone communication or communication with the help of Internet.

What happens in intellectual and emotional spheres of person's mentality? How does the linguistic activity change? These are the questions that require immediate psychological research.

Theoretical and experimental works directed to determination of psychological possibilities of up-brining of a child, a teenager, of a youth are of crucial importance in our science.

The studies that discover laws of cognitive, social and spiritual development are brought to the foreground. Their goal is revealing secrets of a growing person, inner life, sufferings, doubts and aspirations, common and specific, including creative abilities of children, particularities of formation of spiritual needs, development of motives of multi-facet activity-playing, educational, work, sport, artistic activity; communication and other forms of human activity-individual and group activity.

We have to acknowledge that we have thoroughly studied subject and practice side of human activity, especially of a growing person. But we have weakly considered the side of motivational-emotional type of activity. Meanwhile this side of activity is getting the main factor of development of the contemporary man and society.

That's why fundamental psychological studies of creative, particularly, artistic activity, activity that enables to understand the world through emotions are topical.

Naturally, a specific status is conferred to psychological studies of arts creating "surviving reality", giving a man the possibility to "endure what has never happened".

There is a lot of work to do studying changes in personality development, first of all, the possibilities of strengthening of emotional stability of growing people, their psychological stability against appeared

difficulties. In the second place we should intensify the search for new youth passions, including musical ones, to determine how they help to increase empathy. Thirdly we need to find the means of making healthier family and school environment. Unfavorable environment is the reason, according to psychologists and sociologists' data, of personality anxiety, school neurosis, mental deviations, development of border states.

Feelings of gladness, children's heroes (starting with heroes of children's tales) the aspirations for the future are opposed to grown-ups' world where every day parents speak how to survive and earn money plus cynical scenes of violence and sensuality "streaming" out off television.

So determination of means, mechanism of changing socio-cultural environment is one of the acute tasks of fundamental psychological research including revelation of conditions of formation of values of growing people, their attitudes and dispositions.

Therewith psychologists and teachers should choose: what are we preparing young people for? Do we accept the main values of West? (competition, success, power, money) Do we want to prepare the young man for the responsibility of himself and others, of the security all over the world stimulating acts worthy of a man's name?

In this relationship we must seek for efficient and unexpected ways of prophylaxis of drug addiction, act against a well-organized network of drug spreading which is also destined to sexual and mental enslavement of the young people.

The most important task of contemporary psychology and all its branches: pedagogical, infant, social, differential, age psychology consists in organizing at a new level studies of the core problems of those cardinal tasks which were not mentioned, but which are closely connected with the above mentioned. Unfortunately they were not considered last years. These are the problems of consciousness, thinking, speech, behavior, which require, particularly, special studies of collective, distributed consciousness, united intellect. It exists because school children can get the same information at the same time that their teachers do, using Internet.

One of the key problems, waiting for our goal-oriented studies, is the elaboration of new psychological, psychological and pedagogical basis of a contemporary teacher's professional and personal development and related to it the problem of content and work direction of school psychological service. It shouldn't be "a first aid" when the difficult situation arises, but it should be devoted to special psychological and pedagogical activity, when a practical psychologist is an intermediate link between psychological science and pedagogical practice. On the one hand his work facilitates working out clear attitudes and adequate methods of the

help to children and their parents, and , on the other hand, he determines topical questions of development of psychology as a branch of science.

At the same time we should create theoretical basis and make accurate structural determinations of different psychological help (do not confuse with medical assistance, which must be prevented) to people of different ages because we point out the strengthening of depression, growth of nervous and mental derangements, including posttraumatic derangements, attack of social phobias, strong fear of communication. All this emphasizes the need of development of mental health treatment, psychological consultations, creation of system of efficient of psychological and social and pedagogical rehabilitation, the elimination of consequences of nature, technology and social catastrophes.

This work requires deep studies of psychological and physiological and psychological mechanisms of derangements, conditions, means of compensation and correction.

The way the problems are stated, their decision require in depth studies of methodology of psychological science, verification of notion apparatus, search for new categories, elaboration of conception structure, mechanisms of mental phenomena, determination of principles, models of correlation of classical and postclassical paradigm in psychology, finding its place among other humanistic sciences.

It is obvious that the circle of psychological topical issues, requiring fundamental studies, is not limited by the above mentioned questions, it is considerably larger.

Today the many-sided space of new tasks, themes stretches before our eyes.

They suggest deep comprehension of what is happening and significant expansion of experimental works.

For example, we have not mentioned the problems of emotional states, stress overcoming, conditions of development of children's talents, the foundations of rehabilitation work of children with specific needs, revealing the causes of self-destruction behavior, psychological help to homeless children, social orphans, Psychology of deviation behavior, prophylaxis of adolescent aggression and vandalism of young people and many others. All they must be solved.

We should not disperse our efforts, we need to concentrate on core problems, that suggests the attempts of elaboration complex programs of fundamental studies in association with experimental studies, determination of arisen needs of new methods of psychological testing in age, pedagogical, social, differential psychology, psychological consulting and psychological rehabilitation.

Psychological science can not ignore a kind of a challenge from other domains of scientific knowledge, studying people and their development: existentialism, social anthropology, phenomenology, cognitology, understanding sociology, semiotics, physiology, informatics... We have to elaborate attitude to the data of these sciences, and to ensure the work on the boundary of these sciences. Relationship of psychology and pedagogies must be revised, because the goal of fundamental psychological research is not only to study human nature, but to find the ways of the development through the acquirement of achievements of material and spiritual culture. Besides, psychology must dismiss surrounding impostors.

We must take into account the fact that deep changes have occurred inside scientific knowledge. They are related to shaking of characteristics of classical thinking, particularly monologue approaches, different axioms.

Contemporary science is improving, is strengthening its positions, is enlarging the possibilities, absorbing the constructive principals and approaches of knowledge of a man, his consciousness, sub consciousness. It predetermines the quality of scientific research.

Positive result depends, other reasons apart, on coordination of our efforts inside the Academy and hundreds of psychological departments in Teacher's Trainings Colleges and classical Universities, Institutes of our country.

Unfortunately, all these departments, as well as laboratories of Research Institutes work according to the plans as a rule, connected with themes of the head of the department.

Frankly speaking, these themes are changed only formally, their subjects vary little, the head of the department just elaborates with his scientific workers, post-graduate students, teachers, candidates for a doctor's degree the same subject that formed the foundation of his own thesis 15-20 years ago.

This situation can not be tolerated furthermore. Scientific society needs to overcome the complex of key problems for science development. A part of them is presented to a further examination, refinement, addition. This is exactly only a part.

The need of creation of a coordination council of priority trends in psychological, psychological and didactic, psychological and physiological studies arose a long time ago. However its activity will have a little success if the appropriate departments of Science Ministry, Education Agency and Supervision service don't support it.

Moreover, it seems significant to address all the scientific funds from Russian humanistic fund of scientific researches with a proposal to change

existing practice of holding the contests and distributing grants. We think essential not to choose between the applications but to announce in advance at least half of the vital topics and problems that should be dealt with in applications. The grants must be allocated for development of appointed priority trends.

The same procedure must be established for applications submitted for government prizes in education. It is necessary to indicate what important topics should be treated and how these works will be assessed.

So it is possible to coordinate efforts of all national psychologists to overcome perspective difficulties and to make a leap in this important field of human knowledge.