

Chapter 29

The Rest is Silence

This chapter contains documents that were written in the first half of 1934 and that show a sudden deterioration of the handwriting (large, uneven, shaky) and an even more dense style. During that same period, Vygotsky wrote excerpts from books by other authors (for example, a summary of Freud's new lectures on psychoanalysis; cf. Freud 1933), disease histories, brief notes on developmental psychology, neuropsychology, etc., which are not presented here. The selected documents show that Vygotsky's primary interest in the last months of his life was the question of the semantic dynamics and their loss in pathology. In this respect, patients K. and Z. were of primary importance. K. was a successful and respected dentist, 51 years old, who from about the age of 43 developed ever more severe headaches, became forgetful, lost all initiative, showed a sharp cognitive decline, and eventually became incapable of caring for himself. Z. was a woman, 54 years old, who also practiced as a dentist until she at the age of 40 developed the first signs of forgetfulness, anxiety, and confusion. She gradually began confabulating and increasingly lost touch with reality speaking about an imaginary pregnancy and child. Like K., she showed a sharp decline of her cognitive abilities. Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934) provide very elaborate disease histories and adduce medical arguments to prove that both patients did not suffer from Alzheimer dementia but from Pick's disease. The psychological analysis of both patients heavily relied on the conceptual system introduced by Lewin, which the authors first briefly explained.¹ The psychological field of the subject differs from the actual situation because it is determined by the person's emotions, needs, and intellectual resources. Depending on these personal variables, the objects acquire different valence. Healthy subjects are neither dependent on their emotions nor on the environmental factors (in both cases there is field dependence and rigidity or *Starrheit*) and can flexibly switch (fluidity of *Flüssigkeit*) to other motives when they think this is necessary. In this respect, K. and Z. formed opposite cases: K.'s behavior was heavily constrained by the concrete external field, and he no longer had the capacity to "stand above the situation," whereas Z. seemed to have lost almost all contact with that concrete reality and appeared to be at the mercy of her own inner emotions and motives. Neither was able to flexibly switch from the plane of irreality (thoughts, dreams, emotions, fantasies) to the plane of reality and back again. The ability to flexibly switch between these planes Vygotsky now considered to be the hallmark of the healthy personality. The healthy person can reconceptualize his appreciation of the situation; he can resist his impulses; and he is not rigidly bound to either the concrete situation or his emotional impulses (cf. Samukhin, Birenbaum, & Vygotsky pp. 116–117). This new view seems to be a unique blend of Lewin's emphasis on concrete field vectors and the role of emotions and motives plus Vygotsky's emphasis on the role of words, meanings, and conceptualization.

Propositions on account of Likhtenshteyn's talk

This note was written in violet ink on three cards ("Processing the manuscript") and gives an account of a talk by Likhtenshteyn,² about which we have no information. It is one of the few documents we have about Vygotsky's attitude toward psychotherapy. Vygotsky argues that the psychotherapist works with the client's felt experience (the environment as experienced by the person) and that the therapist must help change that experience to allow the client to overcome his problems. Apart from that, Vygotsky argues that therapies must be based on scientific theories and methods. The theoretical inadequacy of many psychological practices was seen by him (cf. "The meaning of the psychological crisis") as one of the signs or causes of psychology's crisis. Now, ninety years later, we cannot say that psychology solved its problems.

1. *Likhtenshteyn. About psychotherapy.*
1. While abroad, psychotherapy is overestimated; here it is underestimated.
2. Psychotherapy and <outside the psychogenic>.
3. Psychotherapy is *not just* causal. Its different forms: reinforcing, stimulating, and psychosomatic.
4. Psychotherapy in special education, not just during a session. Its characteristic is the work on the inner side of the person. But psychotherapy is the key to special education. <...>
5. I welcome the beginning. We must have a theory and a method. The link with diagnostics. To use *all* existing methods: the test.
6. The theory of the complex structure of mental retardation and so on is the key to psychotherapy.
7. The problem of [the patient's] experience—the psychotherapist works with the [patient's] experience.

Written in the margin: [In what sense it is higher <than ours> (the practice) and in what sense lower (the scientific study). But we want to combine them.]

8. Is the neurosis a *revolta*?³ No. The social class meaning of the neurosis: yes (cf. V. F. [Schmidt]). But not a rebellion, but *suffering*. Vnukov: The neurosis is a bourgeois privilege.
9. Stekel⁴ about the social nature of the neurosis: Hysteria was replaced by the *Zwangsneurose*.⁵ True. Kretschmer: hysteria + schizoprenia + war.⁶
10. *The speaker does not offer a psychotherapy but a re-education.*
11. It is true that one can work with Freud's method without being a Freudian.
12. In the social development of the person, the material is not a pre-requisite. Spirit will never supersede matter, the superstructure—the basis. The supremacy of social development.
13. It does not suffice to work with the system "diamat—practice." [We need] an intermediate link. We cannot take another's theory—[we must] create our own theory, and as we are creating it, we move [forward] in practice.
14. We must know *where* it is incorrect and in order to know that we must positively know our own viewpoint. In general it is a priori non-Marxist. The terms are not suitable; they are correct, but fruitless.

15. The *Intelligenz<prüfung>*⁷ comes from psychotechnics—incorrect. *We too emphasize intellectual development and diagnostics.* The didactic and intellectual character. To work with the [patient's] experience; to create the [patient's] experience.
16. Adler does not have such a coherent system as Freud. But not the generalized experience of teachers. We are in favor of psychotherapy but not just in favor of psychotherapy.
17. A. Rühle⁸ is right with her Münchhausen claim: The person can pull himself by his hair out of the disease.
17. [sic] Add different methods: both hypnosis and Coué.⁹
[Added between the lines probably referring to point 18:] It is true that in psychotherapy also the devil is developed, i.e., the deteriorations.
18. In the example of the post-encephalitic syndrome, there is nothing other than the use of the disease, i.e., the neurotic reactions to the remnants of the disease can be removed but not the general disorders of development, which are *broader and deeper*. What is highest is taken for everything. This is a therapy without diagnostics, without age, without a disease. Neither is there a structural analysis: There is no relation between the syndromes. Psychotherapy *before* the investigation is incorrect. The helping attitude is good. <Psychopathy> is not a post-encephalitic syndrome.

[Written in the margin:] There is neither understanding of the (scientific) case nor scientific psychotherapy.

This is a secondary school teacher.

Aphasia and alalia

This note was written on two cards (“Processing the manuscript”): The first card has red text with some violet text added; the second part is written in just violet ink. The text deals with speech and speech disorders.

NB! S. Ya. Rabinovich¹⁰

Aphasias and alalias

1. *The concept of pathological speech development.*
2. *The clinic of children's speech anomalies* puts forward new diagnostics (compared with Wolpert?): the diagnostics of development.
3. *Problems:* the unity of speech (function + structure + sound structure) and the analysis into units; the essence and the interconnection of the disorders, the dynamics, the classification.
4. Liebmann's classification¹¹ mechanically applies the classification of adult aphasia to children.

5. The compatibility of the different sides of speech and the person.
6. *Two problems*: (a) the unity of the sound side and the semantic side of speech; (b) the unity of the *Grundfunktion* of speech (communication) with its structure (generalization). The *trinity*: social communication–generalization (meaning)–phonology (the word’s sound).
7. Every object of thought can be expressed in an infinite number of ways just like any quantity can be expressed in an endless number of ways (1, 2/2, 1000–999 etc.), but every meaning can be expressed in just *one way*: *In poetry, just like in mathematics, it is impossible to paraphrase.*
8. [R.E.] *Levina*: alalia and the whole structure of speech.¹²
*Yudkovskaya*¹³: the methods, the intellect.
*Pongil’skaya*¹⁴: the analysis of speech that develops in teaching.
9. Communication. The schema. The analysis of development (reactive contra spontaneous development). To learn speech, like normal children learn arithmetic.
10. Agn. Aleks., Petya N.:
 - (a) In the lessons there is one lexicon, in spontaneous speech it is not used.
 - (b) In the lessons there are grammatical structures, spontaneous speech has its own structure.
 It could be proved (in Leningrad), that the (artificial) *speech* of the alalia patient stands *higher* in certain respects than normal speech: cf. sign language. Its strength and weakness differs from the strength and weakness of normal speech. Top-down.
11. Elaborate this without waiting for the end of the data collection.

The classification of psychopathies

The classification of mental disease is an area fraught with difficulties. During the last few centuries, every major psychiatrist has offered his or her own system, and Shorter’s (2015) recent attempt to rewrite the DSM will certainly not be the last. Genetic analyses and brain studies may lead to unexpected connections between syndromes that now seem entirely independent, and re-adoption of the good old longitudinal method may show that the manifestations of one and the same disease vary greatly over time. Vygotsky’s brief note on classification reflects this ongoing process of classification. The note was written in black ink on one card: “Processing the manuscript.”]

NB! The classification of psychopathies.

1. Psychopathies—anomalies of development, partial infantilisms.
2. A classification:
 - (1) *Entwicklungspsychopathien*.¹⁵
 - (2) Organic psychopathies.
 - (3) Defective conditions.
 - (4) Premorbid conditions.

(5) Psychopathic [variants of] development.

Written in the margin: [Expansive, sensitive, and autistic development.]

(6) Symptomatic psychopathies (sexual psychopathies, hysteria).

3. A classification based upon the essence of the psychopathic condition:

- (a) underdevelopment of the character (of the complex structures).
- (b) character anomalies (of the complex structures).
- (c) character defects.
- (d) anomalies, delays, and temperamental defects.

Written in the margin: [Approximately!]

About Patients Z. and K.: Intellect and dynamics

This section is based on a text that was written in black ink on four cards of the type mentioned in chapter 21. Several parts of the text correspond with passages in “The problem of mental retardation,” but it is Vygotsky’s self-criticism that is most remarkable: Vygotsky points out the dualism in his own analyses of the patients Z. and K. If we turn to the analysis in question (Samukhin, Birenbaum, & Vygotsky 1934), we see that the analysis is conducted in several areas: verbal thinking, affective systems, and practical thinking. However, the processes observed in these areas are not submitted to an exhaustive causal analysis. The self-criticism is connected with Vygotsky’s attempt to find a criterion for the unity of intellect and affect, its “indissoluble unit” (“The problem of mental retardation”, p. 233 in Vygotsky 1993), and in this note the criterion is found: It is the free relationship with the situation, the flexible transition from affect to thought to action. This claim is characteristic of the last stage of Vygotsky’s theorizing, but this is rarely discussed in the scientific literature. Also of interest is Vygotsky’s statement about the “unconscious part of thinking,” which Vygotsky believed to be inherent to every act of thought.

NB! About Z. and K. Intellect and dynamics

1. Consciousness determines life (its style) but itself develops from life and forms one of its aspects: *Ergo*, life determines life through consciousness. As soon as we separated thinking from life (from the dynamics), we viewed it as a concept of the psychic and not as a concept of the psychological. We blocked all roads to the clarification and explanation of its most important property: to determine the lifestyle and behavior, to act, to influence.¹⁶
2. The semantic action: In play, it is not transformed into the dynamics of the real action. Semantic intentions behave *in another way* (have another relationship with the motor system, include other semantic—according to the degree of generalization—and *dynamic* systems). It is one thing to think, “I will drop this letter in this mailbox”¹⁷; it is another thing to drop it in an arbitrary mailbox, to send this letter (courier, mail, etc.), to make something known, to offend someone, etc.

3. Point 3 is highlighted in the margin with a vertical line and “!”: [The levels of development of the concept are the levels of transformation of the dynamics (of the affect) of the real action into the dynamics of thinking. Lenin’s path: from contemplation to abstraction to practice.¹⁸ The path from the most abstract and highest concept in the reverse transformation of the dynamics of thinking into the dynamics of the action is the longest: the levels of the descendance, the embodiment, the concretization, the materialization (the live action of the transition of the mental into the physical, the psychophysical problem in the action via the unity; via the affect and the will that are contained in every concept (Spinoza); via the unconscious part of thinking (Hartmann); the unconscious is in *every* conscious act).]
4. In K., the affect is more outspoken: He continually creates new *Spannungen*. *Inde*, his field action is purely in the external field, he mixes up things¹⁹; with her [we see] a law.
5. To study (a) the *Bedeutungswandel*²⁰ in the development of the affect in Lewin; (b) when there is an affect there is no border between the intrapsychological and the extrapsychological systems (Dembo)—becoming affectively feeble-minded²¹ (Lewin); (c) the new problem in connection with these §§—the functional movement downward along the levels of meanings when there is an affect (the affect is mastered by thinking, intellect is the slave or the master of the affects; the affect requires a complex?).
6. The mistake of our analysis of Z. and K. is that the analysis is conducted in two planes: In the external field and in the semantic field, there is no unity but parallelism and correspondence. We must take a *single* plane: because the dynamics of the *flüssig* type, insofar as they are present in the action, are introduced by thinking. The freedom of the dynamics in the real field and in the action is a precise measure of the participation of thinking in behavior. In the child and in Z. and K. (in generalized perception, in object relatedness), *Realität* and *Irrealität* are not differentiated.²²
7. The criterion of the unity of the intellect and the affect is the fundamental relationship with the situation in the sense of constraint and freedom: This is the genuine unit of affect–intellect. The degree of the flight of generalization from the object determines the degree of transformation of the affect of the thing into the affect of the concept.
8. K’s *concreteness* is caused by his *Starrheit*: It differs from the concreteness of schizophrenia (Hochheimer) (he preserved all vital needs and rich concreteness, in K. it is poor). *The child combines Z. and K. in the sense of the change of the dynamic–semantic systems*: There is more flight and more object-relatedness. K. is like a child (the object-relatedness) and like an old man: i.e., he is as opposite to the child as he is similar to him. The similarity is *included in another structure*: cf. In Lewin the mentally retarded is similar to a child of a younger age (no differentiation) and similar to the older person (the *Starrheit*).²³

NB! For the child the word is a property, a part of the thing, it enters the structure of the thing.

Inde (1) It is more closely connected with the thing (by the object relatedness), more concrete, the *Feldmäßigkeit*; (2) but the word simultaneously, as its part, as a tangible word, replaces the thing, it reifies it, preserves the affect (the *Aufforderungscharakter*) of the thing, it is an *Ersatz*, to say it = to do it, it *creates its activity like in a dream*.

That is, word meaning in the child lies in between meaning during the dream and meaning in generalized perception. *Inde, this causes the child's magical thinking!*

Written in the margin: [Object-relatedness. The unity: The semantic field is constrained by the visual field + it is reified (cf. play).]

Patient K.

The note was written in blue ink on one card (“Processing the manuscript”), and—along with several of the other notes in this chapter—it shows overlap with Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934).

NB! K. (Pick?)

1. The description of a picture [goes] beyond what is visible.
2. Better without text (?)
3. “He cannot stop.”
4. *Nachsprechen*²⁴: he changes the text, adds things. No deliberate speech. *It is easier to tell a story than to repeat a phrase*. The tendency to interpretation. Spontaneous speech > deliberate speech.
5. To identify meanings/the assortment of phrases with identical meaning.
6. *Like with Z., there is spontaneity!!*
7. *The tendency to reproduce the Sprachschatz*²⁵—describes the picture—instead of that: princess Tarakanova²⁶ + the pre-revolutionary work of the revolutionaries, etc.²⁷ Like with Z., his answer is spontaneous, but the *reproduction is caused by something*.
8. Two times one card—<a thunderstorm>. He counts the cards at the border several times: The form determines the counting.²⁸ The horse two times—the head and the tail. Two objects on one card he counts as two [cards].
9. It is easy to provoke complete incomprehension.
10. He cannot chose in which direction to count and stick to it. Voluntary attention: He begins to count, and where he gets confused he takes away his finger: aimless counting. With the crest, he got stuck at the intersection. To go from the horizontal [row] to the vertical [column] is impossible; where the row is interrupted, the counting is interrupted (<he cannot do it> without a finger).

Patients K. and Z.

[This note was written on two cards (“Processing the manuscript”) in dark-blue ink:]

(1)

NB. K. and Z.

Two types of *Feldmäßigkeit* – based on needs
– based on communication

On the theory

1. A local disorder: aphasia.
2. The general personality structure.
Communication
3. The hierarchy and unity of the disorders.
The *Flüssigkeit* follows from the irrealität.
4. Physiology, localization, psychology.
5. Normality and pathology: the rudiments of general psychopathology.
6. Methodologically: the experience of causal analysis.
7. Macro- and microanalysis.
8. Epigraph: There is method (system) in his madness + “**Even dementia is not wholly unintelligent.**”²⁹
9. Proverbs: a head on his shoulders + (cf. the back of a chair).³⁰
10. Autism and intelligibility: [results] from communication.³¹
11. The autistic *Wunscherfüllung*³² is a delusion.
12. The *Ärgeraffekt*³³ is an obedience affect.
13. Z.: the motivation of speech ↔ speech without thought.
14. The relative importance of the word changed, it jumps out of the grammatical hierarchy, verbal anarchism. Operations with the word (translation, explanation, definition) are impossible. There is no predicativity.
15. With similar *Feldmäßigkeit* there is opposition everywhere:
 - (1) agnosia: K., an O is the moon,
 3. Z., a dress is small circles.³⁴

Patient K., experiments

This note was written in dark-blue ink as well as in pencil on the back of five cards (“Processing the manuscript”). Judging by the numbering, one of them is missing. The document contains a description of the results of the diagnostic tests carried out with patient K., who suffered from Pick’s disease. Pick’s disease is now viewed as a type of frontotemporal dementia, a rare neurodegenerative disease that causes progressive destruction of nerve cells in the brain. The symptoms of Pick’s disease include difficulty in language and thinking (progressive nonfluent aphasia) but also behavioral changes (e.g., irrational fears, disinhibition, passivity). Vygotsky primarily focuses on the aphasia and shows its typical features such as anomia (inability to find some words), phonemic paraphasia (e.g., saying “gat” for “cat”), and agrammatism (using the wrong tense or word order). Fragments

similar to the present text can be found in Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934, pp. 117–118; 124–126).

[Written in ink:]

[Encircled:] [Patient] K.

The association experiment. A free series + a reactive series.

+ *Apraxia*: Compose a cross according to the model: he begins in the right way, but at the central point he throws down everything. The cross as a whole—without analysis: a slave of the visual field. In the analysis of the e[*x*]periment we see something like a cross. Counting his cross: takes all sides into account although with a mistake. Reproduces “*physionomically*” according to Volkelt.

[Written in pencil:]

The *Wiederaufnahme* of the counting on the second and third day.

Speech: The repetition of words and sentences.

He does not repeat [but] associates (picture—portrait, Germany—Wilhelm). After the question: Which word did I say +, ³⁵ spontaneously repeats with a?, blue? Red. ³⁶ When repeating one phrase, it falls apart. The rephrasing (“somewhere near the raven he found a piece of cheese”). *Clouds gathered in the sky* and it started raining: two words. ³⁷ He retains the content, but not the words—glass ³⁸—*inde* the rephrasing. Fire extinguishes water—*fire* ... smothers water. Water extinguishes water—*of course not*. He understands it but cannot say it. Fire is extinguished with a hose, but what is in the hose he cannot say—fire extinguisher.

Water extinguishes a fire? Yes (after a story about firefighters). Fire extinguishes water? Silence. The identification of the meaning in different forms. ³⁹ A complete disintegration of the understanding of the phrase: “water extinguishes fire.” He is not able to judge what is right and what is wrong. With a nozzle. The stories with “fire extinguishes water” and the other way around +. White and black snow, etc. +. Snow is black when it melts (i.e., the more complex +). ⁴⁰

[Written in ink:]

NB. A remarkable experiment with counting:

1. He counts the border of a square endlessly.
2. Suddenly he forgets a finger and starts counting aimlessly. 5? There is no 5. Counts further 6, 7, 8, etc.
3. With a crest—stops at the intersection—counts endlessly ⁴¹: does not know where to go. He either counts the objects on the picture, or many times the same thing, or aimlessly.
4. Where the row is interrupted, the counting is interrupted. It is impossible to go from the verticals to the horizontals.
5. When he does not count, but names, he cannot view them in succession either, i.e., perceive them at will.

6. Do not count the cards that are turned over: three, four, “a fence.” “I said pencil,” he switches to naming: *remarkable*—here I cannot make up my mind: This is not counting—but he does not name the non-pictures. But the mechanism is: to look at the picture, *inde* to name it. Count how many animals there are: one—cat. *He names them*. Are there more non-animals (3) or animals (2)? *Names them*. Flashes [of insight].
7. In counting he is a slave of the visual field, in naming he is freer. In counting, he is a slave of the field or a slave of the row. A slave of his field in the story (T.)⁴² Suddenly he is clever: I will see—dinner. He improves with help.
8. In counting, he not just counts the pictures but also what is on the pictures (a rake and spades, two pillows). This is a symptom: a slave of the visual field. *Quite another symptom*: He counts, pointing at the horse in various places three–four times: This comes from the aimless counting, the searching for the object (where to point with the finger) for the next number. This is analogous to: 5? There is no 5. 6, 7, 8, etc. And the first is analogous to the switch to naming. When counting with the cards turned over, he looks, his attention is focused on the content of the card to decide whether it must be counted, *inde* it is naming.
9. [sic]. There are no conventional, figurative, or voluntary meanings.
10. He does not see the words, the operation with the word is hampered: glass. He sees the content and repeats it. The wife developed an eye disease: The wife’s eyesight deteriorated. Now it is a dark summer night.⁴³ Now the repetition of meaningless phrases is more difficult and worse than meaningful ones. Now the eye, eyes hurt. Now it is a bright winter day+.

A (black) tablecloth is lying on the table.⁴⁴

A (white) tablecloth is lying on the table. But it is a black <illegible>.

A (black) tablecloth on the table is lying (the phrase falls apart).

A white tablecloth is lying on the table+.

K.

- (1) A *super-long Sättigung*, satisfaction, fills the whole sheet.
- (2) The *Wiederaufnahme*:
 - (a) to cut out a cross (apraxia)—pauze—to draw a cross: There is no *Wiederaufnahme*.
 - (b) to lay a cross with small circles—pauze—to draw a cross: *Wiederaufnahme*—spontaneously returns to the first task;
 - (c) to draw no cross, which he cuts out—[cf.] §a:—to copy—the *Wiederaufnahme* of the small circles.
 - (d) *Ersatz* = 0.
 - (e) again cut out—instead of that—the *drawing of crosses*—a *spontaneous Ersatz as in the mentally retarded*.
 - (f) The naming and showing of geometrical figures—<*unstable*>.

NB!

1. The classification of geometrical figures.
2. The recognition and pronunciation of letters and syllables.

About will

This note was written in pencil on one card (“Processing the manuscript”) and contains a definition of volition that is not present in Vygotsky’s published writings.

NB! That volition is an Ego affect is clear from:

- (1) The birth of the hypobulic—negativism and stubbornness = the person’s motives;
- (2) Bergson—everything that flows from the *whole* personality is a free action; the same in Spinoza – free is what follows from the essence of the person;
- (3) The saint who mounts the stake because a refusal would contradict the basic Ego affect and his whole life;
- (4) Volition. It is a concept that has become an affect; a strong-willed person is a person who decides what to do and how to live on the basis of an Ego affect.

On the method of studying the affect, the intellect, and the will

Written in pencil on one card (“Processing the manuscript”), this text contains plans for experimental studies of the affect in the spirit of Lewin. These plans were only partially realized, for example, in the replications of the studies by Lissner (modeling with plasticine) and Karsten (including the “the support of the affect from above” with the instruction “to show another child how to solve the problem”). See the detailed description in “The problem of mental retardation” (cf. pp. 237–238 in Vygotsky 1993). We have no information about experiments, in which experimentally elicited motives clash with each other and the subject must make a choice along the path of the greatest resistance.

NB! On the method of studying the affect, the intellect, and the will.

- I. *Intentions*: general ones—particular ones: The dynamics and laws will vary depending on the degree of generality; we must change (the variable in the experiment) the degree of generality + the ascendance along the levels of the *Flüssigkeit* of the dynamic processes + the distance in the sense of the isolation from the motor system and confront these different *dynamic-semantic* systems with *different situations* (where there is a mailbox and where not, etc.) to clarify *the transformation* of the dynamics of the first sort into the second sort.⁴⁵ Clarification of the fundamental relationship with the situation from the viewpoint of the gradients of the dynamics.
- II. The *Ersatz*. *The first series*: the *Ersatz* according to the meaning and the experimental activity; different degrees of the generalization of the *Ersatz*: the complex and the concept.
See on the back + a cat + rails.⁴⁶
The second series: the semantic action—identity according to meaning, and not according to the concrete–sensory nature. Levels of generalization.

The third series: experimentally elicited unreal *Ersatz*—both in speech and in thinking. The next sentence is boxed with an arrow to the words: [Levels of generalization] The semantic action is not the same as identical themes.

The fourth series: *Ersatz* with meaningless and meaningful actions.

These experiments have one general trait: to reveal that the different structure of the dynamic–semantic systems and the different proportion in them of the dynamics of the first and the second sort will determine the *Ersatz*.

5. The *Ersatz* in thought problems (counting in one’s head).
- III. *Sättigung:* The problems of volition—Claparède, Lewin, Spinoza, and James: the action along the path of the greatest resistance. The support of the affect from above. The change of the *choice situation* when it is interpreted. I must design my experiments with experimental motives in this way: One series of actions is *pleasant according to its meaning* but includes an *unpleasant* action; another series has neutral or even pleasant actions, but its meaning is unpleasant: a choice along the path of the greatest resistance.

NB! G. Vas. [Birenbaum’s] remarkable experiment: (a) the subject is drawing a house, he cannot be interrupted, he wants to add the window; (b) *they interrupt him* and give him the opportunity to build a house; the *Wiederaufnahme:* the subject begins to draw, but not a house, but another object.

The sense and meaning of this fact: We thought that the *Ersatz* would occur *either* according to its meaning, *or* according to its sensory activity: When we model a cat from plasticine, the *Ersatz* can be *either* rails from plasticine (until 3 years) *or* to draw a cat (through glass) [after 3 years]. It turns out that a splitting is possible so that the *Ersatz* is partial: The person *draws* (a *Wiederaufnahme*, thus there was no *Ersatz*) but not a *house* (thus the *Ersatz* took place with respect to the theme).

We can interpret this from three viewpoints:

(a) There is no connection between the dynamics of thinking and action: What remains is that drawing is dynamically charged independent of the meaning; (b) the dynamics of meaning is relatively independent from the dynamics of the action: the meaning is identical and formed the *Ersatz* for the meaning of the theme, the activity is not identical, is not an *Ersatz*; (c) in general there is not just communication between systems (dynamics), but there are also other forms of mutual influence (the one modifies the other, devours the other, parasitizes on the other).

The last conference (patients Z. and K.) or: *Pro domo sua*

The document consists of the texts written on the back of eight cards (“Processing the manuscript”), which presumably formed one whole: (1) the texts on cards 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 were written in pencil; (2) the text on cards 3, 4, and 5 were written with black ink. The note on card 8 differs from all the others. Its content is partially reflected in the article “The problem of mental retardation,” but for the biographer its last part is most interesting. It refers to two figures with whom Vygotsky identified: Hamlet and Moses. Comparing himself with the Old-Testament figure, Vygotsky hinted that he indicated the road out of psychology’s crisis and left us his tablets of stone. That would be consistent with what we

know about Vygotsky and his group of students and devoted colleagues. As we know from their correspondence, somehow they felt destined to change psychology under Vygotsky's messianic guidance: to gather the faithful and to lead them out of the desert of empty empiricism into the promised land of the "science of the new man" (cf. Van der Veer & Valsiner 1991). In this sense, Vygotsky's last lines are truly tragic: He realized he would not be able to finish his work and that he failed to set foot in that new territory. Whether he was even close to realizing his dreams, the reader can judge for himself after reading these notes as well as Vygotsky's published writings. Vygotsky himself argued there are two ways to measure a person's merits: by what the person accomplished and by his unrealized potential, i.e., by what he left undone Varshava & Vygotsky 1931, p. 5).

[Written in pencil:]

The conference

1. Z.

About what will you give a lecture?

–About what! About what!

Why the big auditorium?

–Big, of course.

2. K. His memory is disturbed because of the absence of meanings—[what is preserved is] just the object-relatedness. *But the body memory* (cf. the *Wiederaufnahme*). Memory requires the transition from one situation to another one: from the real to the semantic field. When the semantic field and the meanings perish, *there must be amnesia. The a-spontaneity results from the absence of meanings*. Cf. Hochheimer—speak, when they ask, speaks about the magnet.⁴⁷ *K.'s a-spontaneity = Hochheimer*. The same cause: semic aphasia. Highlighted in the margin with a double vertical line: [The *Starrheit* of the dynamics precludes the dynamics of the semantic field in K. because there is no fluidity.]

The center of everything:

- (a) the fundamental relationship with the situation is free or constrained;
- (b) meaning and its radical change (cf. the counting in Z. and K.).

In Z., words are an *Ersatz* action: [caused] by the isolation of the meanings from the object-relatedness.

[The sentence is connected with point 4 by an arrow and points 1 through 4 are highlighted in the margin with a vertical line:]

External critique—the *Grundstörung*.

- (1) The radical change of the word.
- (2) The radical change of the relationship with signification. <...>
- (3) The *radical change within the field* and of the action in that field. (in K. *external* activity, in Z. *internal* activity)

(4) *From the <focus> to the personality. The unity of affect and intellect.*

Written in the margin: [Here (K.) [there is] activity without actions; in Z. there is fantasy without activity.]

[Written in black ink:]

[Encircled:] *Sehr wichtig.*

[The next paragraph is highlighted with a vertical line in the margin:]

The unity of affect and intellect (*correct*)—*to find the unit.*⁴⁸ But apparently fluid dynamics do not *at all* exist *outside thinking* (this is the essence of *the unity*); ergo, insofar as they are found in the dynamics of the field, *they are introduced there from thinking. Not like this:* There exist dynamics of two sorts (fluid, free and *starre*, constrained) *independent* of the intellect (the elements: hydrogen), and there exist two sorts of activity (thinking and real activity) independent of the dynamics, and these two sorts of dynamics can mix in different combinations (oxygen and hydrogen). *But like this:* There exist two unities of *dynamic activity*: thinking and real activity. Both have their *dynamic aspect*, i.e., there is a dynamic system *sui generis* of a specific type and sort. Outside activity, the *two types of dynamics* do not exist *in abstracto*. *This is the most important and fundamental.*

Ergo, we can say that the disturbance of *thinking is primary* (*understanding thinking as a dynamic–semantic system*, as mental life). *Inde the dynamics of the specific sort that correspond with thinking disappear everywhere* and gives way to the *pure dynamics of the field*, which Lewin *in abstracto* distinguishes (actually, *thinking and activity exist together—ergo*, both types of dynamics exist in mixed form—in pure form—only in the absence of thinking (an automatic action) in the action (a *meaningless action*) or in (*unreal*) *thinking that is absolutely separated from the action*. Both these pure cases of dynamics exist in K. and Z., because in one there is absolutely meaningless action, and in the other there is absolutely unreal thinking. *To say that thinking is disturbed means to say that the dynamic processes of a specific sort are disturbed everywhere. The role of thinking in activity consists in the introduction of new dynamic possibilities in activity.* To say that thinking is disturbed means to say that subtle and complex dynamic processes in activity are disturbed. To say that thinking of the irreal type is disturbed means to say that *the dynamics of the real field are destroyed* (the things lost their characteristic affect—in schizophrenia) *secondarily* (for in Z., the external *Feldmäßigkeit* is preserved with momentary flashes).

Encircled: [Cf. Lewin: The dynamics of the mentally retarded are dynamics without thinking; *ergo*, we return to the intellect (+ *its dynamic aspect*) as the center and primary disorder of the mentally retarded.]

We must explain their capacity and incapacity from one principle: *a radical change of word meaning as a semantic–dynamic system*. *Ergo*, in K., the dynamics (*starr*) of the field are preserved; in Z., the fluid dynamics of thinking are preserved also in thinking.

[Written in pencil:]

The unity of thinking as an activity of a specific sort and the fluid dynamics as a specific sort. Encircled: [*Unified dynamics—the semantic system*. This explains the preservation of the affects: *affective memory*.]

How can they remember the affects of the past (in Z.)—It is not the *Wiederaufnahme* but a *fluid affectivity in the concepts* that is always ready to refresh itself: *the problem of affective memory*. *She gave birth once* and thought all her life [about the child]. If there would be no autistic thinking, the affect would disappear like in animals, who have no affective memory.

We cannot say, what is *more* affective.

[Written in the margin:]

Jakob: With Pick senile feeble-mindedness disappears. Ego/external world—Z.

Z. or K.: *How* are they affective. *Two different kinds of affectivity*:

With her—the dynamics of thinking (the second sort).

With him—the dynamics of the real field (the first sort).

Highlighted with a double vertical line in the margin and connected by an arrow with the next paragraph: [And these *how*, these *quale*,⁴⁹ this sort of affectivity, preserved or lost, determines the *Grundstörung*—the radical change of the meaning of the object-relatedness.]

Ergo: The disturbance of thinking determines the disturbance and preservation of the affect in its two sorts. The complete unity of affect-intellect from one principle \pm the symptoms.

Philosophical analysis, Lenin.

In K., the piece of fantasy is damaged (the first sharp bend of the zigzag); in Z., it is hypertrophied (there is no second bend—[the analogy in Lenin:] idealism, religion).

*NB! Pro domo sua*⁵⁰

This is the last thing I have done in psychology, and I will die at the summit like Moses, having glimpsed the promised land but without setting foot in it.⁵¹ Forgive me, dear creatures.

“The rest is silence.”⁵²

Notes

1. The text of Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934) contains approximately 40 German words, mostly borrowed from Lewin’s theoretical framework.
2. L.I. Likhtenshteyn (? to ?). Russian psychotherapist. Cf. Likhtenshteyn (1958).

3. Revolt, rebellion, mutiny (Portuguese). Written in Cyrillic. Vygotsky may have been inspired by the revolt of 1926, which installed a military dictatorship in Portugal.
4. Wilhelm Stekel (1868 to 1940). Austrian psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and initially a follower of Freud. Stekel published on neuroses, dreams, and perversions. When the Nazis came to power, Stekel moved to London where he later committed suicide to end the pain caused by the diseases from which he was suffering.
5. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (German).
6. In “The diagnostics of development and the pedagogical clinic for difficult childhood” Vygotsky wrote: “While evaluating the possibility that schizophrenia is psychogenic, Kretschmer points out that, during the war when hordes of hysterics descended on hospitals, there were no schizophrenics among them. In Kretschmer’s opinion, this statistical observation shows which psychological stimuli provoke the schizophrenic process. Many life-threatening situations and vital emotions (fright, fear of one’s life, hunger, cold, thirst, pain) do not in this respect appear particularly dangerous. Schizophrenics are surprisingly unresponsive to this whole scale of feelings.” Cf. p. 271 of Vygotsky (1993).
7. Intelligence test (German).
8. Alice Rühle-Gerstel (1894 to 1943). German Jewish author of children’s books, feminist, socialist, and psychologist. Like her husband, Otto Rühle, she was an adherent of Adler’s individual psychology. After the advent of the Nazis, she emigrated to Prague and eventually to Mexico where she befriended Trotsky, Frida Kahlo, and Diego Rivera. On the day of her husband’s death from a heart attack, she committed suicide. In 1926, Vygotsky wrote a review of Otto Rühle’s (1925) *Die Seele des proletarischen Kindes (The soul of the proletarian child)*.
9. Emile Coué (1857 to 1926). French psychologist, pharmacist, and student of Liébeault and Bernheim (cf. Valsiner & Van der Veer 2000). Coué developed a method of conscious auto-suggestion based on the manifold repetition of the phrase “Every day, in every way, I’m getting better and better.” Modern research has renewed interest in such placebo effects.
10. See chapter 11, note 37.
11. Albert Liebmann (1865 to 1924). German physician and specialist in language disorders. Vygotsky probably refers to his book on speech disorders in backward children (Liebmann 1901).
12. Subsequently, Levina (1951) suggested a classification of alalias and distinguished between alalias caused by disturbances of sound perception, visual perception, articulation, and mental energy (*aktivnost*).
13. Tamara Izrailevna Yudkovskaya (1905 to 1958). Russian defectologist and specialist in the education of the deaf.
14. Anna Flerontovna Pongil’skaya (? to ?). Russian defectologist, specialist in the education of the deaf, and author of books and manuals about speech development in deaf children.

15. Developmental psychopathies (German). That is, mental disorders that originate in childhood or adolescence.
16. See p. 27 of “The problem of mental retardation” in Vygotsky (1993).
17. The example is borrowed from Lewin (1926, p. 335). Once the person has the intention of mailing a letter, the sight of the mailbox triggers the response. The mailbox now has *Aufforderungscharakter* (affordance, valence). Lewin (p. 345) wrote that the same is true for a knot in a handkerchief: It has become a sign that reminds the person to carry out a certain action. This would, of course, become one of Vygotsky’s favorite examples.
18. Cf. the section “The historical and the contemporary theory of concepts” in chapter 10.
19. Vygotsky uses a term (*soskal’zyvanie*), which refers to the inability to stick to the point and the tendency to digress into the discussion of unrelated matters.
20. Change of meaning (German).
21. Perhaps a translation of the German *affektive Verblödung*, which was a quite common term in German psychiatry at the time to designate what were seen as inappropriate emotional reactions in schizophrenic patients.
22. Vygotsky’s note: “Thinking and action: The things’ affect (the *Aufforderungscharakter*) is preserved in thinking (*inde* the problem of the child’s magical thinking!). That is, <illegible> the relationship (type of unity) between them. The dynamic semantic (conceptual) systems are moved toward generalized perception. This fully determines both the meaning and the real field in their relationship, i.e., the unity: for it determines the degree of participation of thinking in the action and the degree of the flight, of the freedom.”
23. See Lewin’s (1933) chapter on mental retardation.
24. To repeat a spoken text (German).
25. Vocabulary (German).
26. Princess Tarakanova (1745 to 1775) was a false pretender to the Russian throne.
27. The subject did not describe the content of pictures but digressed by telling irrelevant stories.
28. The subject had to count cards that were spread on the table in the form of a square (e.g., 5 × 5 cards), but he just repeatedly counted the square’s border (the 15 cards that form the outline) and forgot the 9 cards in the middle.
29. See chapter 12, note 68. The text in bold script is a quote from Lashley (1930). Lashley argued that the behavior of patients with brain damage is not totally chaotic but is carried out in an orderly fashion.
30. In *Thinking and Speech*, Vygotsky gives more examples like the “foot of a table,” the “neck of a bottle,” etc. See p. 154 in Vygotsky (1987).
31. Piaget argued that childhood autism and egocentrism disappear as a result of the communication with peers and adults who do not understand autistic or egocentric utterances.
32. Wish fulfillment (German).

33. The anger emotion (German). Refers to Dembo (1931).
34. "He reifies the geometrical figures (calls a circle a moon, a quadrangle a board, an ellipse an egg)." Z. presumably could not recognize a dress on one of the cards as such and just mentioned its details (the small circles). See p. 122 of Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934).
35. A common German name. Perhaps a reference to Wilhelm II (1859 to 1941), the last German emperor. The subject had to repeat words like "picture" and "Germany" but instead began associating. When the doctor explicitly asked "Which word did I say?" the answer was correct. See p. 124 of Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934).
36. K. spontaneously echoed words but, as we saw previously, deliberately repeating them proved difficult.
37. Often the subject was only able to repeat one or two words of a sentence.
38. "He does not notice the word as such, like we do not at all notice the transparent glass through which we see some object" (Samukhin, Birenbaum, & Vygotsky 1934, p. 123). That is, the subject focuses on what is signified by the word (e.g., a flower) without being able to reflect on the meaning of the word as such (e.g., what is a flower? What does it have in common with a tree?).
39. The subject proved unable to understand that the sentences "fire is extinguished by water" and "water extinguishes fire" are identical.
40. The subject had to select cards with a correct text (e.g., "snow is hot," "snow is white," "snow is cold," etc.) and was able to do that. On the question of the doctor whether snow is black, he replied that it can be black when it melts. This Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934, p. 124) saw as a sign of his extremely concrete form of thinking.
41. The subject had to count small colored circles that were arranged in the form of a cross.
42. A patient with dementia mentioned in other notes not published here.
43. The subject was asked to repeat the sentence "The wife developed an eye disease," but could not do it literally. The sentence "Now it is a dark summer night" he found difficult to repeat because it was a clear winter day.
44. The subject was asked to repeat the sentence "A black/white tablecloth is lying on the table" and had difficulty repeating such a sentence when it contradicted reality. See p. 126 of Samukhin, Birenbaum, and Vygotsky (1934).
45. That is, the transformation of the sluggish, sticky dynamics of the action into the fluid dynamics of thinking and vice versa.
46. See previous text. Somehow the plasticine dog has become a cat.
47. See chapter 26, note 43.
48. Vygotsky's note: "It does not correspond with the unit of meaning: There are two interfering systems of units in thinking."
49. Which (Italian) or quality (Latin).
50. In defense of one's house, for oneself (Latin). Words supposedly spoken by Cicero to recover the right to practice the profession of lawyer and to recover his house.

51. Deuteronomy 34:1–4: “And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan... And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.”
52. Hamlet’s last words.

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