

Science, Ideology and Practice in Post-Soviet Psychology: An Attempt of Introspection

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the dynamics of the relationship between psychological science and practice in post-Soviet psychology, taking into account both global and local trends and influences. In the process of considering the stages of approaching psychology to solving applied problems and problems of psychological practice proper, special attention is paid to the problem of the relationship between the natural-scientific and socio-philosophical aspects of the existence of modern psychology. The article emphasizes the position that, having separated from philosophy almost 140 years ago, the current psychological science turned out to be entangled in various ideologies - from panpsychologization and antipsychiatry to the ideology of constructivism. In conclusion, it is stated that the narcissistic attempts of modern psychological practice to reduce the polysyllabic phenomenology of real human problems, about which people turn to a psychologist, exclusively to their mental manifestations - there is no more, no less, a substitution of the true meanings of the profession. In place of defending the interests of the patient (client), modern psychology, put their own interests, including purely shop and commercial. The article defends the idea that the true solution to the problem of the development of modern psychological practice lies in the synthesis of the humanistic potential of psychology with a fundamental natural scientific basis, and not in the imposition of far-fetched ideological schemes, shamefacedly referred to as the "methodology of constructivism".

Keywords: *Psychotechnics; Academic Psychology; Applied Psychology; Methodology; Psychological Practice*

Introduction

Psychology is a system of knowledge about the origin, development and manifestations of the psyche in general and the human psyche in particular. The subject of its study is the basic laws of the generation and functioning of psychic reality as a special form of reflection of reality by living beings. In addition to this, psychology has another important mission - to serve the development of society and humanity as a whole. A feature of the development of psychology is the fact that it is rooted simultaneously in the humanitarian sphere (religion, philosophy, history,) and in natural science. After all, the first scientific research itself, as well as the experimental method, thanks to

which psychology took shape from a speculative discipline into the field of science, arose thanks to the physiology of the sense organs, psychometrics, psychophysics. As a matter of fact, it is precisely the needs of practice, primarily medicine, and then pedagogy, that served as a powerful stimulus for the development of psychology as a science. At the same time, the philosophical-religious-historical branch of psychology, gravitating towards speculative reasoning and constructions, contributed to the fact that psychology, from the moment of its formation, became an arena of acute ideological struggle due to the fact that psychology claimed not only to know the psyche, but also to control it.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that even now, already in the 21st century, the problem of relations between psychological science and practice is of particular importance, not only without losing its sharpness, but also acquiring new sharp edges. Our article is devoted to a description of its essence, state at the present stage of development of post-Soviet psychology and trends that have emerged recently.

To the history of the issue

The application of scientific knowledge to social practice has always been the focus of attention of any scientific discipline and scientists. So, for example, Archimedes became famous not only for the discovery of the basic law of hydrostatics, but also for the fact that he used parabolic curved mirrors to burn enemy ships during their siege of Syracuse, and also built the first planetarium. The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates not only described four types of temperament and wrote 18 medical treatises, but also successfully treated people, formulating the famous deontological principle «Do no harm!» The needs of human practice generally underlie the production of knowledge. Mathematical knowledge is born of the need for measurement and calculation. Astronomical - by the need of navigation. Physical - the need to understand the laws of motion and their causes. This series of examples can be easily continued with an essential reservation: practice has not always directly moved science. Let's say D.I. Mendeleev discovered the periodic law not at all on the basis of a practical «order». Nevertheless, the desire of science and scientists to show and prove the importance of their science for society is absolutely understandable. This is especially true for psychology. Forming into an independent science only at the end of the 19th century, it, represented by its best representatives, from the first steps of its independent existence, took energetic steps in order to establish itself as an important and useful scientific discipline in society. First of all, it is worth noting the figure of Wundt's student Hugo Munsterberg (1863 - 1916). We can say that the idea of applying psychological knowledge in practice was his professional dominant. Having received a doctorate in psychology and a doctor of medicine, Munsterberg began teaching in Freiburg, and he became well known as he equipped a laboratory with his own money since the administration of the local university could not allocate funds for the starting a laboratory [1,9,10].

Later he was invited by W. James to Harvard University as a chair of the psychology laboratory where Munsterberg became almost the first psychologist to move from purely experimental work to solving problems of the applicability of psychology to various spheres of social life. Problems of management, professional selection, factors contributing to an increase in labor productivity, adaptation of technical devices to the psychological capabilities of a person, as well as an increase in the effectiveness of advertising, trade, training - everything that has received the name «psychotechnics» is an undoubted achievement of the initial stage of development of psychology in relation to solving practical tasks. These tendencies had a significant impact on psychology in the then Soviet Union.

H. Münsterberg's ideas about the importance of psychology for social practice in the 1920s, were actively promoted by a Soviet defectologist and pedologist L.S. Vygotsky, who sought to combine American instrumentalism with Marxist ideology. In his work «The Historical Meaning of the Psychological Crisis», he identified three interrelated moments to explain his position on how this crisis can be resolved [4].

The first is practice. According to L.S. Vygotsky, we cannot say that something has changed in academic psychology until it is through practice that it can confirm the truth of its thinking, and when it begins to strive not so much to explain the psyche as to master it. Practice, according to L.S. Vygotsky, requires a “special philosophy”, i.e. methodology. This is the second important position of the famous thinker. He believed that it was practical psychology that created the «iron methodology.» And from the methodology of psychotechnics, i.e. the philosophy of practice can be expected to resolve the problems of psychology with regard to its usefulness for practice. The third point is related to the reforming role of psychotechnics. Psychotechnics is considered by L.S. Vygotsky as a kind of psychology, pushing for a break with the previous academic psychology and at the same time shaping a new real psychology, which “would lead to subordination and mastery of the psyche, to artificial control of behavior” [1,7,8,12]. Freud’s psychoanalysis also played a special role in these processes - the method of working with patients, in which the doctor acted from the standpoint of a psychologist who analyzes the psychological (motives, needs, desires, ideas, including those that are not clearly manifested in consciousness), not the somatic causes of suffering. It is known that one of the leaders of the so-called «Russian revolution» of 1917, Leo Trotsky, was fond of psychoanalysis and organizationally supported Freudian initiatives in defeated Russia. Later, psychological analysis as an independent activity of a psychologist influenced the formation of psychological practice as an attempt by psychologists to find their own subject of activity, overcoming the position of «service personnel» in relation to other specialists (doctors, teachers, engineers, military, sports coaches, etc.)).

The problem of psychotechnics or the application of practical psychology to solving specific problems of activity has arisen with new urgency since the beginning of the 80s of the XX century. And this is no coincidence, because the inclusion of psychological science directly in the solution of practical problems, the use of the achievements of psychology in social practice became the most important condition for increasing productivity and improving the quality of labor, increasing the efficiency of production and management, maintaining health, developing technology and technology, and improving social relations. Scientists and practitioners alike felt that a decisive turn was needed to the real practical tasks that life poses to society.

Fundamental and applied psychology: attitude to practice

Therefore, the questions of the practical application of psychological knowledge for solving various problems that arose in the second half of the twentieth century in connection with the onset of the era of the scientific and technological revolution, led to the fact that, starting from the early 80s of the last century, applied psychology began to develop rapidly. Applied psychology is all branches derived from academic psychology, i.e. establishing the regularity of the functioning of the psyche, focused on the application of the results of psychological developments in various areas of practical life: in industry, medicine, education, trade, sports psychology, jurisprudence, etc.

What is the specificity of applied psychology, and in what relations did fundamental and applied psychology remain and remain?

The point is that fundamental psychology, i.e. psychology, which was built taking natural sciences as a standard, adheres to the principles of determinism, verification, objectivity and is separated from any ideology by an indispensable condition for denying bias in research. One can say that, adhering to strict academic requirements, it serves «pure science», trying to establish the basic, basic (actually fundamental) laws and patterns of the functioning of the psyche. General, differential, social psychology can be attributed to fundamental psychology. Within the framework of general psychology, the universal laws of the functioning of mental professions, properties and states are investigated. These studies serve as the basis, the basis for understanding how the psyche generally functions. Social psychology studies the patterns of behavior of people in groups, invariants of communication, patterns of functioning of human communities. Differential psychology examines the essential characteristics of individual differences, which are based on constitutional and psychophysiological characteristics.

A striking example of discoveries from the field of fundamental psychology can serve as the famous study of V.A. Lefebvre, in which he proved that if the subjects were given exactly the same (poured in one form) models of beans and offered to sort them into «good» and «bad», the general the proportion will always correspond to the principle of the «golden ratio»: 0.62 [9]. It is clear that there was no direct “order” from practice, as well as in relation to the periodic table. On the contrary, this study logically followed from the purely theoretical development of reflexive structures by V.A. Lefebvre, in particular, from his theory of readiness for bipolar choice. According to this theory, the choice of a person is influenced by the environment, the image of the environment and its intention. It would seem: how does this compare with practice? And here’s how: it allows you to predict the logic of results with a high probability in those situations in which there is a need to predict the general contour of behavior in human communities. This study perfectly confirms the well-known statement of A. Einstein that there is nothing more practical than a good theory.

At the same time, applied psychology is focused on the use of the patterns and properties of the psyche discovered by fundamental psychology in specific psychological disciplines, which are associated with solving practical problems in various types of activity. Medical psychology examines the manifestations of the psyche in painful states of the brain, nervous system and, in general, the body. Educational psychology - in the educational process. Labor psychology includes many sections: engineering, psychology, ergonomics, military, political, judicial, sports. And also age, professional selection, psychology of management, advertising, trade, psychophysiology. All these disciplines use in their research developments from fundamental psychology, but at the same time enrich them with specific empirical research based on their own subject. Thus, fundamental psychology acts as a kind of a donor, and the applied psychology supplements and enriches the general laws of the functioning of the psyche with specific empirical data.

According to F.E. Vasilyuk, psychological practice requires theory like air. But turning to the existing psychological concepts of personality, activity, social group, etc., the psychologist-practitioner does not find in them the answer to his main questions: «Why» - what is the meaning, what are the ultimate goals and values of psychological counseling, training, etc. ?; “What” exactly he/she can and should do, what is the area of his/her professional competence? «How» to achieve the desired results?; «Why» certain actions lead to exactly this result? What are the internal mechanisms that are triggered in this case? In a word, the practicing psychologist expects from the theory not an explanation of some essences external to practice, but a guide to action and a means of scientific understanding of his/her actions. But besides, and this is the most important thing, psychological practice needs its own theory. It is quite obvious that a theory that has matured in the academic research plane, in isolation from psychological practice, is not able to meet these requirements [11].

Thus, psychological practice cannot develop productively without theory, and at the same time, it cannot rely on academic theory. F.E.Vasilyuk, following L.S. Vygotsky, considers the psychotechnical theory necessary for psychological practice. If the general subject-matter of classical academic theory is a fragment isolated by the method from the object of research, faceted and limited by this method, then the general subject of psychotechnical theory is the method itself, bordering and creating the space of psychotechnical work-with-object [11]. This is the essence of the relationship between academic psychology and psychological practice. In other words, each of them creates its own theory. But in order to gain a deeper understanding of the claims of psychological practice, it is worth analyzing its ideological and philosophical, or, as they are now more often expressed, methodological sources.

Constructivism in modern psychology as an attempt at a radical solution to the problem

In order to place the correct accents in understanding the latest stage in the relationship between science and practice in psychology, attention should be paid to the scientific interpretation of the development of science. And here one cannot do without a well-known classification of the historical stages in the development of science, namely: classical, postclassical (nonclassical) and postnonclassical one. This implies that in classical research the subject and the object are separated and independent of each other, in the postclassical research the subject (observer) is included in the research process itself (an example from nuclear physics: the trajectory of an elementary

particle depends on the actions of the observer), and in postclassical science he the observer becomes an object of study. The following can be argued: in classical science, the cognitive attitude to the object prevails. In the postclassical one, special attention is paid to the analysis of the means of activity and specific conditions (Pavlov's dog in the bench). In post-nonclassical science, social determinations, the system of values of culture, ideology are taken into account, which affect the goal-setting of research [3,5-7]. But in the context of our topic, it is even more important to understand the next aspect of this problem. The fact is that these stages do not mean at all that some of them are outdated (for example, classical), while others, on the contrary, are advanced, for example, post-non-classical. Oddly enough, one can quite calmly speak in this context about fashion, about the desire to look modern, about commercial interests, and about replacing the traditional rational "truth to be discovered" by the concept of "project". You can put it this way: psychologists, claiming to be subjects of psychological practice, claim to design a person under the guise of helping him. A kind of «technoscience» appears.

The constructivist approach to cognition assumes that the subject does not just use the products of the mechanisms that have developed in his brain or in the cognitive system, but builds an idea of the environment in which he has to act, right in the course of solving the problems facing him [2]. But the fact is that the absolutization of activism is fraught with tendentiousness, the ban on which is the golden rule of classical science. For example, it was precisely the rejection of research, the protrusion of interpretations instead of comprehending the real causes of suffering in psychoanalysis, bias and intolerance to another point of view that led to the fact that in psychoanalysis for more than a century not a single case of patient cure has been described. Described are only different timing of this procedure. So the actual psychological practice, based not on scientific, but on ideological postulates (and isn't psychoanalysis primarily an ideology?) should not be absolutized. Since it claims to be a manifestation of the postclassical and even postnonclassical stage of development of psychology, it is simply obliged to take into account polydeterminism and mental states, and the entire richest clinic of psychosomatic and mental disorders. And, of course, it (psychological practice) should not oppose its constructivism to natural realism or, as the methodologists of this practice prefer to say, to naturalism. After all, the so-called methodology is based primarily on ideology. So one can reasonably conclude that, having broken free from the fetters of philosophy, psychology, especially in such a form as psychological practice, fell into the fetters of ideology. The ideologies of constructivism, panpsychologization and antipsychiatry. Therefore, ethical questions are quite appropriate here: whose interests are advocated by the practicing psychologist: those of the patient (client) or his/her own, when he/she refuses to make a diagnosis, or to refer the patient(client) to a doctor? What is more important for him/her - the ideology (methodology) he/she defends or real help to a person without a claim that it is precisely and only a psychologist who can help with this. Consider a typical situation: divorce. It is one thing if the person who applied for the consultation has increased anxiety, low mood, and tearfulness. And it is completely different if he/ she suffers from depression, while chronic diseases (for example, hypertension, cholecystitis, etc.) have worsened. And if the situation is aggravated by problems with the division of property? It is absolutely clear that only psychologist him/herself cannot help a person without cooperation with medical doctors and lawyers. Therefore, living, suffering people cannot be sacrificed to panpsychologization and antipsychiatry, covering up this sacrifice with constructivist ideology, and lurking one's commercial interest.

Realization of the entire humanistic potential of psychology on a natural scientific basis, and not on far-fetched ideological schemes, is the true solution to the problem of the relationship between psychological science and practice.

Conclusions

1. The problem of relations between psychological science and practice is of particular importance in our time, for which there are a number of important reasons. Among these reasons are both the complication of modern life and the laws governing the development of sciences in general and psychology in particular.

2. Questions of the application of scientific knowledge to social practice have always been in the center of attention of any scientific discipline and scientists. As for psychology, from the first decades of its independent existence, it, through its outstanding representatives, has taken energetic steps in order to establish itself as a socially important and useful scientific discipline. First of all, it is worth noting the figure of Wundt's student Hugo Munsterberg (1863 - 1916). His idea of applying psychological knowledge to practice in the widest possible range had a tremendous influence on Soviet thinker Lev Vygotsky, who tried to combine American instrumentalism with the Marxist ideology of social activism.
3. However, the onset of the era of the scientific and technological revolution led to the fact that, starting from the late 70s - early 80s of the last century, applied psychology, directly focused on practical needs, began to develop rapidly. Numerous disciplines of applied psychology (medical, pedagogical, age-related, labor psychology, sports, management, advertising, etc.) use in their research developments from fundamental psychology, but at the same time enrich them with specific empirical research, based on their own subject. Thus, fundamental psychology acts as a kind of a donor, and the applied psychology supplements and enriches the general non-regularities of the functioning of the psyche with specific empirical data.
4. The specificity of the current situation in psychological science is that at the beginning of the 21st century another kind of psychology entered the arena under the name "practical psychology", which is increasingly being transformed into the name "psychological practice". According to the well-known Vygotsky's follower F. Vasilyuk, the difference between psychological practice and practical psychology lies in the fact that psychological practice is "one's own" for a psychologist, while practical psychology presupposes participation in "someone else's" practice. The relationship between them was determined by the principle of implementation. In the new situation, according to the position of F. Vasilyuk, in connection with the birth of psychological practice proper, the usual slogan about the introduction of psychology into practice should be reversed: on the contrary, practice should be introduced into psychology.
5. In our opinion, such a formulation of the question is dictated not simply and not only by the claims of psychologists to their independence, but also by the influence of constructivism as one of the tendencies of post-classical and post-non-classical science, in which the concept of traditional rational truth, which should be discovered, is replaced by the concept of "project". Psychologists, claiming to be the subjects of psychological practice, claim to design a person under the guise of helping him. A kind of "technoscience" appears. So one can reasonably conclude that, having broken free from the fetters of philosophy, psychology, especially in such a form as psychological practice, fell into the fetters of ideology. The ideologies of constructivism, panpsychologization and antipsychiatry. The real practice of working with people, especially with suffering people, testifies: the realization of the entire humanistic potential of psychology on a natural scientific basis, and not on far-fetched ideological schemes, is the true solution to the problem of the relationship between psychological science and practice.

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