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Fifty years after L. I. Bozhovich's personality and its formation in childhood: recovering her legacy and her historical role

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the legacy of one of the more controversial figures of Soviet psychology, L. I. Bozhovich. The paper presents a brief historical outline of Bozhovich's scientific life. Also discussed are the theoretical differences between Vygotsky and Leontiev. The main theoretical concepts proposed by Bozhovich are discussed, making explicit their interrelations as well as their implications for Soviet psychology. The paper also presents Bozhovich's periodization of personality, based on the relation between social situation of development and *perezhivanie* as the theoretical core on which that periodization.

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Lydia Ilinishna Bozhovich was one of the more original, audacious, and creative Soviet psychologists, who unfortunately, as a result of omissions and/or distortions related to Soviet psychology either in the Soviet Union or in Russian and Western psychology, has remained relatively unknown in Western psychology up to the present day. The reasons for devoting this paper to her at this specific moment are varied, but among them I would like to point out three aspects that make her work and this discussion timely and significant. First, 2018 marked 50 years since the publication of her most important book, *Personality and Its Formation in Childhood*, first published in 1968. Second, Bozhovich was not only an outstanding scientist, she was a strong personality, a disciple of Vygotsky, and a participant in the Kharkov school who broke from Leontiev's dominant positions, creating her own research program and her own research time. To be a woman at that time who became head of her own research program, actively criticizing and opposing A. N. Leontiev in his comprehension of motivation and personality, was not an easy task within Soviet psychology. Third, Bozhovich not only advanced topics that were of low priority within Soviet psychology, such as motivation and personality, but she also presented a different interpretation of Vygotsky's legacy to that presented by Leontiev and his group. She was the only Soviet psychologist to bring to light Vygotsky's concepts of *perezhivanie* and "social situation of development" as the basis for advancing the topic of personality development in Soviet psychology.

In addition to the above-mentioned historical and theoretical reasons, it is important to note why, after so many years, her legacy has gained new force at the present moment, when the last stage of Vygotsky's work, which was also largely ignored in both Russian and Western psychology, is gaining visibility through concepts like *perezhivanie*, sense, and social situation of development. The attention to these concepts is closely related to the emergence of new lines of research within cultural-historical psychology, such as funds of identity, child motivation, subjectivity, and new paths toward understanding psychological development. Of significance, Bozhovich was the only Soviet psychologist to use *perezhivanie* and social development as the basis for her proposal on periodization of personality.

This paper is oriented toward the following four goals: 1), to make a historical presentation of L. I. Bozhovich within Soviet psychology; 2), to draw a picture of Bozhovich's program, the main

theoretical concepts developed by Bozhovich and the way they were articulated within a theoretical proposal on personality, having the motivational sphere of personality as its main theoretical core; 3), to make explicit the main principles and stages upon which Bozhovich's proposal on personality development was supported, and; 4), to make explicit how she represented an alternative interpretation of Vygotsky's legacy, different from that sustained by Leontiev and his group.

A brief outline of L. I. Bozhovich's career in Soviet psychology

Lydia Ilinishna Bozhovich (1908–1981) studied pedagogy in the Department of Pedagogy of Moscow State University from 1924/1925 to 1929/1930. During her time there, she worked together with four other students, and all five later continued together as students of Vygotsky. These four were Liya Slavina, who continued side by side with Bozhovich throughout her scientific career, Nataliya Morozova, Roza Levina, and Alexander Zaporozhets. The five worked together in the seminar run by Vygotsky at that time in the same institute which, in the 1930s, left Moscow State University to become the V. I. Lenin Pedagogical Institute, a name preserved until the end of the Soviet period.

In 1931, Bozhovich began work in the Department of Psychology at the Academy of Communist Education, as an assistant. At that time, Luria was the Chair of the Department of Psychology, working with Leontiev and Vygotsky after Vygotsky's differences with Kornilov, who continued as director of the Institute of Psychology (Bostmanova, Guseva, & Ravich-Schervo, 1994). In 1930, the Academy of Communist Education, where they all worked, entered a period of disgrace, something very common in those years, particularly in 1930, when Stalin expressed with all his force his repressive intentions. As a result of the precarious working conditions in Moscow, Vygotsky's group of students and collaborators moved to Kharkov (Bostmanova et al., 1994; Gutkina, 2008; Zinchenko, 2012), while Vygotsky went to Leningrad, attending to an invitation made by Rubinstein.¹

Bozhovich went to Kharkov together with Leontiev and Zaporozhets and, in fact, was one of the founders of the Kharkov group. However, as early as 1933, her interests began to differ from those that ruled the main research undertaken under Leontiev's direction and in which Zaporozhets actively participated (Gutkina, 2008). In Kharkov, Bozhovich addressed the study of cognitive motives and their role in the formation of theoretical thinking (Zinchenko, 2012).²

Bozhovich remained in Kharkov until 1935, then she returned to Moscow and began work in the High Institute of Communist Education, where once again she was together with A. N. Leontiev. In 1939, she received the scientific degree of candidate of sciences in pedagogical sciences.³ In 1944, she began work at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, founded by Chelpanov, as a scientific assistant in the area of child psychology, headed by A. N. Leontiev, who was surrounded by many of his fellows from his time in Kharkov. S. L. Rubinstein was the director of the Institute at that time. In 1946, Bozhovich created the laboratory for the formation of children's personality, being its head until her retirement in 1976 (Bozhovich, 2009, p. 361). It was in the second half of the 1940s that the first publications in regards to children's motivation appeared by Bozhovich and her closest collaborator at the time, Slavina (Bozhovich, 1945, 1948; Slavina, 1948).

One interesting feature of Bozhovich's work was her organization of an important research group around her at the child personality formation laboratory (Mitjans Martínez, 2016). That group was the only one to advance research on motivation and personality in education in Soviet psychology and, at the same time, to organize professional work in schools based on the development of personality and motivation (Bozhovich, 1950; Bozhovich, 1955, 1960; Bozhovich, Morozova, & Slavina, 1951; Slavina, 1948, 1951). It is interesting that Bozhovich was part of the group known as the *pyaterka*, composed of four women, Bozhovich, Slavina, Morozova, and Levina, along with Zaporozhets, the only man. From this group, the first three converged with Bozhovich some years later to make motivation and personality the main focus of their work.

Bozhovich's advances in the theoretical construction of human motivation and personality

In this section, the main concepts advanced by Bozhovich are discussed along with her attempt to integrate them within the motivational sphere of personality, as its more important theoretical core. These concepts were motive, social situation of development, *perezhivanie*, and psychological formations of personality. The concept of motive never found a precise definition in Bozhovich's work. In general, in psychology this concept has never been clearly defined by its psychological nature, but mainly by its function of driving specific behavior. However, Bozhovich clearly disagreed with the definition of motive as the object of activity (Mitjás Martínez, 2016). On this topic she stated that it was impossible to use "motive" while always taking into account certain objective things. In trying to analyze which needs "crystallized" in one or another "motive," what is behind the child's inclination toward one object or another, she wrote, we found a complex knot of needs, desires, and intention, where it was difficult to understand which was the object of activity and which the motive (Bozhovich, 1978, pp. 19–20).

Bozhovich clearly defended the idea that human motivation is irreducible to elements, so it was not possible to split one object from the subjective organization of elements integrated within the motive. Her use of quotes to refer to motive is an expression of her questioning of this concept. In her more mature theoretical works, published between 1968 and 1988, Bozhovich perceived that human motivation should be treated as a system and not as isolated impulses oriented to motivating specific behaviors, actions, or performances, such as a motivation to play or to learn, a moral motivation, a religious motivation, and so forth. Nonetheless, the advancement of this goal presupposes a clear differentiation of concepts that were traditionally used synonymously without specifying their psychological nature, such as interest, need, motive, and *perezhivanie*, among others. Bozhovich made an effort to define the scope of each of these concepts.

Rather than defining motives by the kind of behaviors or psychological functions from which they result, in Bozhovich's work motives came to be defined by their psychological nature, hierarchy, and organization, while motivation was defined as the central core of personality as a system (Mitjás Martínez, 2017). Bozhovich defined higher human motives by the unity of intellectual and affective processes emphasized by Vygotsky in the last period of his work. Further, Bozhovich advanced the idea that any activity is driven by several motives, which could only be known by their psychological nature and not by any explicit dominant behavior or operation. As Chudnovsky (2009) remarked,

Bozhovich did not place primary emphasis on an object impelling action; she was most interested in the subjective aspect of motivation. For her, a sense of duty, a consciously formed intention, and the immediate desires of a child are all motives. Undeniably, the psychological nature of these phenomena are different. (p. 13)

Another important distinctive feature of Bozhovich's approach to motivation was her search for the integration of motivation within the wider self-regulatory processes of personality. Looking to overcome the existing gap between motive, on one hand, and consciousness and personality, on the other, Bozhovich brought the concept of will to the discussion on the psychological nature of motive. The concept of will was remarked upon by Vygotsky on several occasions, although he never went into any depth on its integration within a psychological system. In this regard, Bozhovich raised several questions. Why, for example, do some goals consciously placed by individuals become drives for their behaviors and others not? On the basis of which psychological mechanisms can human beings, unlike animals, act against an immediate desire, but in agreement with a consciously formulated purpose? The lack of answers to these properly psychological questions results from the non-solution of the problem of the genesis of the specific human motives of behavior (Bozhovich, 1974, p. 22).

Those questions that, in her opinion, remained open and unsolved in psychology led Bozhovich to three interrelated topics in the study of human motivation: the hierarchical structure of motives as a system of personality; the inclusion of intentions as part of the psychological nature of specific human motives; and what she defined as the psychological formations of personality, which were based on the

plural character of human motivation. The psychological formations of personality result from the integration of consciousness and emotions, forming a motivational complex in which intentions, projects, and human ideals embody emotions, becoming the higher level of human motivation.

Bozhovich's definition of motive embraced intentions, values, and other human processes capable of generating behaviors engaged with affections. This definition allowed an understanding of the multiple motives that could be embedded in human acts, forming psychological formations of personality, which was the preferred term used by Bozhovich (1968) in her final works. Such different motives, in fact, imply different levels of organization and hierarchy. Motives and their functioning belonged to personality, not to human activity. Following this position, she separated two interrelated sets of motives for children's learning, those specifically related to learning and those defined by children's relations with the environment. According to her, the first kind of motives includes cognitive interests, the need for intellectual activity, and the desire to acquire new knowledge; the second type of motives includes the need to communicate with others and the desires to be approved by others and to occupy some place within the system of social relations to which children belong (Bozhovich, 1974).

The new representation brought by Bozhovich to the study of learning represented an important step forward in relation to the individualistic and aseptic positions according to which school processes, and especially learning, were studied in Soviet pedagogical psychology; for Bozhovich, children's social lives, mainly their family lives, were considered relevant to the learning process. Despite the narrow character of the processes described by Bozhovich as belonging to the second type of motives, all of these related to immediate collective processes, whether in the family or at school. That position represented the first attempt within Soviet psychology to open up an avenue capable of overcoming the gap between learning at school and children's social lives.

The hierarchy of motives and the qualitative difference in their psychological nature were two important focuses for Bozhovich and her research team. While on the one hand Bozhovich broadened the definition of motive, on the other hand, she reduced the range of possible motives that could be considered as dominant in the hierarchy of human motivation; only individualistic and collectivistic motives and those oriented toward practice are considered in the higher positions of that hierarchy. Bozhovich (1968) called the hierarchy of motives an orientation of the personality, around which were grouped other needs and motives. This definition constrained the study of the cosmos of children's individual social lives and their dynamic and contradictory character in the course of their actions. The concept of orientation of personality in fact reduced the heuristic value of the plurality of human motivations as the basis of human acts; indeed, other possible motives would always be secondary to these three types, upon which the orientation of personality is organized.

Bozhovich, in what I consider a mark of her generation, attributed to the collectivistic motives several characteristics of psychological functioning that cannot be deduced unilaterally from the dominance of that kind of motive. This is clear in her statement that in people with harmonic personality, the motivational sphere reaches its highest forms of development. The motives oriented toward others are dominant and not particular selfish interests (Bozhovich, 2009, p. 363).

Nonetheless, her advances in the understanding of motives based on their different qualitative psychological nature represented an important step forward for the study of human motivation. The concept of *psychological individual formations of personality* embodied Vygotsky's search for the unit of emotional and intellectual processes. These psychological formations of personality represented an important line of research in Bozhovich's laboratory. In Bozhovich's (1974) own words, "We want to expose some data and ideas about how the conscious objectives assumed by an individual, the intentions and resolutions adopted by him/her, obtain a driven character, i.e. become a motive for behavior" (p. 44).

Bozhovich's prior definition represented a step forward in one of the problems historically associated with motivation: motives are not external to psychological functions nor are they just one more function, as motivation has been historically treated in psychology (Leontiev, 1975; Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1988; Murray, 1938). In cultural-historical psychology, only very recently has the topic of motivation begun to gain increasing attention from researchers, mainly through

concepts like imagination, *perezhivanie*, subjectivity, and funds of identity. Nonetheless, one of the problems is that the attempts to advance the study of motivation frequently lead back to an emphasis on the cognitive nature of motivation, or they appear reduced to a single concept without advancing the theoretical construction of a new psychological system capable of explaining human motivation (Gonzalez Rey, 2014).

The extension of the concept of motive to different human processes capable of embodying needs, which generate emotions, extends the concept to different contexts with different structures and functions. Bozhovich stated, in relation to this new level of motive represented by the psychological formations of personality, that it is possible to state that in ontogeny, individual needs modified themselves not only by their contents and dynamic, but also by their structure. Consciousness intervenes in their structure and the needs begin to be expressed through consciously defined goals, appearing through purposes and decisions. In these cases, rather than dealing with needs, we are dealing with new functional formations, a kind of unity between need and consciousness, between affection and intellect (Bozhovich, 1974, p. 48).

Bozhovich's definition of motives allowed the study within pedagogical psychology of complex processes that had always remained outside the focus of Soviet psychology, such as the relation between children's school performance and motivating processes in their personalities. Bozhovich established a relation between the type of dominant motive in personality and the psychological formations of personality. While the hegemony of individualistic motives (individualistic orientation of personality) led to the search for immediate gratification, such as always being shown to be one of the best in the classroom, having higher grades, or being socially valued by others, the dominance of collective motives (collectivistic orientation of personality) is based on the development of psychological formations of personality. The concept of psychological formation of personality was first studied in research on moral ideals (Dukat, 1961; Kazakina, 1967). According to Bozhovich (2009), moral ideals as psychological formations of personality fulfill two main functions, to create one more or less stable and intensive system of moral motives and to be a moral reference for actions in different situations of life (p. 251).

Despite the fact that Bozhovich's view of motivation integrated different processes and motives, she, like the rest of Soviet psychology, remained imprisoned within an unclear taxonomy of concepts such as interests, desires, impulses, and feelings, among others. For Bozhovich, the concept of need continued to be the main concept around which the motivational sphere is organized. However, even with these limitations, Bozhovich specified human motivation as a system, transcending the dominant trends that reduced motivation to an epiphenomenon of intellectual processes, or still worse, replaced the concept of motive with non-psychological concepts. Bozhovich also clearly differentiated human needs and those that characterized animals, which are directly related to gratification, while the main characteristic of human needs is the continuous generation of new tensions addressing the creative – new cultural productions. She wrote that in the course of the development of a need, new functional qualitative structures also appear, mediated by their own structure and combinations, within the composition of which affective and cognitive components are involved, as well as assimilated forms and means of behavior that, in the end, form those higher syntheses, which, in Vygotsky's view, should basically be called the child's personality (Bozhovich, 1978, pp. 168–169).

The more general philosophical orientation upon which the study of moral ideals lies was the main principle assumed by Bozhovich for the study of personality:

As personalities, human beings are characterized by having their own views, their own moral demands, defined by life goals, which they strive to achieve. All this makes them relatively strong and independent from extraneous environmental influences. They are characterized by active, rather than reactive, behavior. (Bozhovich, 2009, pp. 299–300)

Following Bozhovich's position, Chudnovsky (1981) stated, "Moral ideals allow children to transcend the limits of an immediate situation and its closer environment, orienting their behavior to

long term goals, allowing them to be relatively independent from immediate influences” (p. 75). Taking both statements together, it is possible to conclude that the premises for advancing the topics of subject and subjectivity had been defined in Soviet psychology; the capacity to create long-term goals is based on new subjective creations on the basis of which individuals can become capable of opening new paths within the immediate normative system. Those positions were not welcomed by the structures of power inside and outside of Soviet psychological institutions which, to some extent, defined the relatively modest status of Bozhovich during Soviet times.

While moral ideals were studied by Bozhovich, the representation of profession among adolescents and youths came to be studied in Soviet psychology for its relevance to professional orientation (Braguina, 1976; Krylov, 1975). The concept of professional representation also represented a psychological formation of personality. Nonetheless, the group devoted to the study of professional representation was mainly centered on the analysis of the content of such representations, omitting the possible value of the concept for the study of human motivation.

My research in Cuba on moral ideals began before my doctoral studies in Moscow, and one of the criteria that I took to be an expression of the effectiveness of moral ideals was the way in which moral values influenced the professional decisions of Cuban youths (González Rey, 1979). At that point in history, at the beginning of the 1970s, many Cuban students changed their professional projects in order to study professions considered more important for the country at that time, for which multiple calls were made by different political organizations and educational institutions (González Rey, 1979, 1982, 1983; González Rey & Mitjans, 1989).

The integration of two different types of motives, moral and professional, within two different types of psychological formations of personality, moral ideals and professional intentions, embodied Bozhovich’s idea that different motives and needs integrate with each other around dominant motives, forming such a powerful psychological synthesis that they could be considered the units of personality. The concept of psychological formations of personality represented the theoretical core of a new representation of personality understood as a motivational system. This definition allows an understanding of individuals as capable of generating alternatives in the face of the dominant, normative character of the environment.

Bozhovich’s theoretical model of personality development

In her more important work, *Personality and Its Formation in Childhood*, Bozhovich proposed a model for the development of personality, with the following stages:

- (1) The characteristics of the child’s first needs as driving forces of development;
- (2) The problem of the child’s preparation for school education;
- (3) The formation of personality in early school age;
- (4) The formation of the child’s personality in mid-school age (adolescence);
- (5) The formation of personality in later school age.

The criteria used for this periodization of personality development were the ages for different school stages, which reveals the high level of school institutionalization in the Soviet Union (Mitjans Martínez, 2016). At the same time, this proposal revealed a narrow representation of the development of personality, due to the exclusion of children’s other important experiential areas. This model of personality development was the only one developed in the Soviet Union based on a program of research related to the different processes of personality in each of these stages.

Theoretically, Bozhovich based her definition of the different stages of personality development on Vygotsky’s concept of *perezhivanie* and social situation of development. Strongly influenced by Vygotsky, Bozhovich (2009) stated,

This way, all school age stages, early age, middle and high school age, differ from each other by the particular qualitative structure of their characteristics, but the transit from one stage to another does not represent a process of evolving, but a dialectical leap toward a new quality. (p.128)

Following this representation of personality development, Bozhovich characterized each of the stages through which the development of personality takes place as based on different situations of social development. She asserted that the particular combination of the internal processes of development and the external conditions that are typical of each stage of development defines the psychological dynamic of development during the course of each stage, as well as the new qualitative and singular psychological formations that emerge at the end of each stage (Bozhovich, 2009).

Bozhovich strictly followed this criterion in the definition of each of her proposed age stages. Each stage was characterized by a different social situation of development. Taking the concept of social situation of development as the basis for the definition of the periodization of personality, Bozhovich also assumed in this period of her work the concept of *perezhivanie*, defined by Vygotsky as the psychological unit of the social situation of development. However, Bozhovich further developed this concept of *perezhivanie* as defined by Vygotsky, criticizing the path taken by Vygotsky in explaining the genesis and development of *perezhivanie*. In this respect she stated that if the concept of *perezhivanie* that he introduced led us to the comprehension of the real causes of child development, the later search for the link that defines this development ends at the concept of generalization, leading us back to intellectualist positions (Bozhovich, 2009).

Bozhovich, unlike Vygotsky, transformed *perezhivanie* into a key concept of the motivational sphere of personality. *Perezhivanie*, for Bozhovich, is an integrative concept that becomes a theoretical core of personality, having the capacity to generate new needs, recalling G. Allport's concept of the functional autonomy of motives, according to which one motive can engender another that is functionally independent from the original one. Bozhovich (2009c) explained this process as follows:

Children may therefore strive to once again relate to something they experienced previously that became appealing to them. In this case, *perezhivanie* is transformed from being a means of orientation to a goal in and of itself and leads to the emergence of new needs – the need for *perezhivani* themselves. However, in this regard as well, *perezhivani* are not the exception. In the process of development, the entire human mind ceases to be a mere apparatus of orientation and adaptation. (pp. 74–75)

The main idea contained in the above quotation is the recognition of the capacity of *perezhivanie* for becoming a source of new needs, the need of *perezhivanie* in itself. This means the need to again produce new *perezhivani* that are related to different experiences, in this way signaling a new kind of human need that is essentially subjective. The concept of need, even when it was very referred to regularly in the Soviet psychological literature, was never well explained, since it was always used a priori of human activity. The best example of this is Leontiev's position that need finds its object, becoming a motive.

Contrary to Leontiev, Bozhovich described *perezhivanie* as a process, the capacity to engender new needs, on the basis of considering the human mind as a generative, transformative apparatus (Mitjans Martínez, 2016). Her emphasis on the subjective side of motivation and development did not mean an anti-dialectical approach to the subject-world relationship. Instead, it represented a path for overcoming the simplification and banalization of that relationship, recognizing all of its complexity. This is clearly pointed out by Bozhovich (2009) when she states:

Perezhivanie is like a knot in which are assembled different influences and circumstances, both external and internal. But precisely in this way it is impossible to examine *perezhivanie* as a unitarian whole; it is necessary to assume the task of continuing to decipher this concept and, consequently, to discover those forces behind it, which, in the end, condition the course of the child's psychological development. (p. 134)

Bozhovich developed Vygotsky's principle that to know the relevance of any external influence for the child's development it is important to know the *perezhivanie* generated by the child living that experience. Nonetheless, Bozhovich perceived that the environment never influences children

through isolated influences, but rather through a set of different circumstances and influences that need to be deciphered. This knot of influences is inaccessible through direct observation or through the direct results of experiments. Based on this, Bozhovich and her group made interesting methodological contributions that are beyond the scope of this paper.

Each stage of personality development discussed in her book, *Personality and Its Formation in Childhood*, is characterized by Bozhovich through the close interrelation between the changing social environment at each age and how it becomes relevant for the child through psychological characteristics, forming the special combination from which emerges the *perezhivanie*, as well as the psychological formations of personality in each of these developmental stages. Bozhovich's emphasis on the generative and active character of personality was an important premise for advancing the topic of human subjectivity and its fictional character, which is inseparable from how human beings experience their life in terms of achievements and failures. It was not by accident that Chudnovsky was precisely one of the first to discuss the matter of subjectivity in Soviet psychology.

Bozhovich introduced the important notion of subject of personality, which opened the comprehension of personality as a dynamic system, in which the subject's decisions and positions are active moments. At the same time, she stressed that the individual as the subject of personality is not always conscious of the process in which he is actively participating. She stated that the act always presupposes a particular kind of subject activeness. It goes together with a struggle among motives and the process of making decisions, despite the fact that in many cases this struggle is not conscious for the subject (Bozhovich, 2009).

In these two last sections, devoted to the main concepts developed by Bozhovich and their assembling within a theoretical model of periodization of personality, it is possible to stress the following three main ideas. First, the concept of motive was understood within the motivational sphere of personality. In fact, Bozhovich mainly centered on those higher motives that differentiate human beings as such. The concept of psychological formation of personality synthesized Vygotsky's main principle from his later work of the unity of intellectual and affective processes. The concepts of psychological formation of personality and *perezhivanie* were based on the different social situations of development drawn by Bozhovich in her proposal of personality development. Second, Bozhovich made an attempt to interrelate the different concepts defined and used by her within personality understood as a psychological system. Despite her narrowing of the possible motives that she considered as dominant in her definition of motivational hierarchy (orientations of personality), she and her team brought empirical research to the different orientations of personality. This research established the relation between the collectivistic orientation of personality and the emergence of the psychological formation of personality, such as moral ideals (Chudnovsky, 1981; Neimark, 1974). For her, it is only the hegemony of collectivistic motives that leads to an adequate psychological development. Third, the novelty of Bozhovich's proposal was not reduced to the new concepts introduced by her and their interrelations, but lay in having opened up new paths of scientific research, according to which, for the first time in Soviet psychology, learning and the different behaviors of children at school were discussed from the perspective of personality and its development.

Bozhovich's criticism of the dominant interpretations of Vygotsky's legacy as understood by Leontiev and his group

The study of motivation and personality was secondary in Soviet psychology due to the difficulties in explaining these concepts through the dominant concept of internalization that prevailed in activity theory as the way to explain how external operations become internal, properly psychological operations. The identification of internal, properly psychological processes with cognition is clear in the following statement by Elkonin (1995): "The idea of this so-called internal – or, I might better say – intellectual activity has become confused with the question of the division of any activity, including intellectual activity, into an orienting and an executive component (p. 32).

Instead of centering on Vygotsky's instrumental stage, as Leontiev and his group did, Bozhovich centered on the last period of Vygotsky's work, when the topic of children's affectivity and

personality had again become his focus of attention. As recognized by Elkonin (1984) in his epilogue to Volume IV of Vygotsky's *Selected Works* in Russian:

Here Vygotsky posed the question of the unit that contains in itself the unity of the environment and the child's personality. The author proposed to take as this unit *perezhivanie*. Among current psychologists this problem was studied by one of his students, L. I. Bozhovich (1968). (p. 403)

Elkonin's words revealed the lack of attention to that concept in Soviet psychology, a gap that also showed how little attention was paid to that last stage of Vygotsky's work, since *perezhivanie* was one of the concepts intrinsically associated with Vygotsky's main positions at the end of his life.

Leontiev's shift in relation to Vygotsky, from 1930 onward, has been completely omitted from a historical point of view due, to a great extent, to the absence of information available for studying that shift. Such information appeared in Russian only in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1934, following the death of Vygotsky, Leontiev wrote a short article that was not published again until the publication of Leontiev's selected works in 1983. The first item in those selected works was precisely that 1934 article, entitled "On Lev Semionovich Vygotsky." In it, Leontiev's main theoretical core since the beginning of the 1930s was clearly expressed in the following way: Since the first systematic research into the genesis of higher – mediated – human psychological processes, it has been possible to formulate the main laws of its development. Firstly, socially and externally mediated activity only later becomes individual and psychological, preserving in principle the same structure (Leontiev, 1983, p. 19).

From the 1930s, when the Kharkov group was formed, Leontiev and other participants in the group began to address critiques toward Vygotsky's approach to consciousness. As V. V. Davydov recognized, at the time, Leontiev, with his group of Kharkov collaborators, did not follow Vygotsky's orientation toward the study of the structure of consciousness and did not recognize the developmental functions of emotions, but remained in a position to study the genesis and development of consciousness in practical activity in terms of research on the structure of their own activity (Davydov, 1996, p. 6).

That dominant position extended until the 1970s. Leontiev's group, which was at the head of the Department of Psychology at the Moscow State University from the 1930s to the 1970s, oriented its research to the experimental study of cognitive psychological functions, while motivation and personality remained outside of its research program. B. Bratus was the head of a group of young researchers, among whom were Asmolov, Stolin, Petrenko, and Subbotky, that was the first group in the Department of Psychology to conduct research into personality and motivation based on the new definition of senses as relations between motives, given by Leontiev in his final book, *Activity, Consciousness and Personality*, at the end of the 1970s. Bratus (2013) stated,

In the 1960s and 1970s the priority was given to the study, from the positions of Activity theory, of sensation, perception, attention, memory and thinking. In the little, recent and cult Faculty of Psychology of the Moscow State University, some of the better laboratories in the Faculty only worked directly on the topic of perception (mainly at the request of the Ministry of Education), and frequently entered into polemics with each other. (V. P. Zinchenko, Yu. Guippenreiter and even A. N. Leontiev himself). (p. 20)

Bratus confirmed the dominant cognitive orientation of the research program headed by Leontiev. Cognition was the more appropriate topic to which to apply the main principles of activity theory. Nonetheless, in his writing from 1934 to 1983, in homage to his teacher, at the end of his life, A. N. Leontiev recognized the importance of Vygotsky's works related to consciousness, which he had criticized before Vygotsky's death and to which he would never again refer throughout his work.

In 1937, only three years after the death of Vygotsky, Leontiev made a strong critique of the concept of *perezhivanie* and the environment in Vygotsky's work, the first of various critiques of Vygotsky, such as his critical preface to the 1965 edition of *The Psychology of Art*, a book that had remained largely forgotten during Leontiev's political hegemony within Soviet psychology from the end of the 1950s to the middle of the 1970s. In Leontiev's 1937 critique, first published in 1998, he asked what is *perezhivanie*? Vygotsky defined *perezhivanie* as unity of environmental and personal moments, but this is a formal definition (Leontiev, 1998, p. 115). Leontiev clearly perceived the vagueness of the concept in Vygotsky's writings. However, the main critique that he set out in this

draft embodied an ideological questioning, something that implied the nullification of an author during the Soviet period. In this regard, Leontiev (1998) wrote,

Durkheim openly declared: “a person is a dual being: an individual being has its roots in an organism and has a circle of activity that turns out to be very limited, while a social being represents the highest reality of the intellectual and moral order that we can learn by observation – I mean society.” This declaration can serve as the banner of neopositivism, but it can be transformed into a verdict on the Vygotskian theory of environment. (p. 119)

As Vassilieva (2010) stressed, “The strong ideological underpinning no doubt contributed to the rise of the theory of activity to the status of the official Soviet psychological doctrine” (p. 150). Leontiev’s search for political visibility seemed to have appeared via a sequence of criticisms addressed against Vygotsky from 1937 onward, having as their basis ideological arguments.

In the same text in which Leontiev (1998) seemed to have the purpose of definitively separating himself from Vygotsky’s legacy, he stated, (b)efore the child enters into contact with his or her mother in verbal communication, he or she relates to her as the being who immediately satisfies his/her need for food, the immediate object of his or her first instinctive need – the food need. But even if we observe more complex ways of satisfying the child’s needs, on the basis of which the child’s higher, specific human needs are developed, then we find that the child’s relationships with reality are first and foremost material relationships (p. 121). Leontiev’s position of explaining behavior in terms of material, practical activities gave no room for identifying the affective relationships between mother and child as the main source of the child’s development at that stage of life. Communication as the main path for human affections was completely overlooked by Leontiev’s theoretical proposal.

Further, need and object in Leontiev’s understanding appear both a priori of human activity; needs were defined as something internal, inherent to the individual, while objects are given in reality, whether natural or created by human beings. This dualism of organism-environment characterized all of Leontiev’s work, including his last book where he claimed that need is only a state of necessity of the organism that in itself is not capable of giving rise to any specific activity. Only as a result of its encounter with the object corresponding to it is it able to become capable of directing and regulating activity (Leontiev, 1975, p. 87).

Leontiev’s blindness to the subjective nature of psychical processes prevented him from avoiding the dualism of organism-environment evoked by his definition of need. This dualism has no solution within the more general theoretical basis that underpins Leontiev’s activity theory. Despite the key place attributed by Leontiev to the concept of activity, he understood needs as states of necessity of the organism, that is, he did not refer to the specific character of human needs. In his formula that “need encountered its object,” the subject of this process is omitted, as are the human relations within which both needs and their objects should emerge.

Bozhovich and Vygotsky advanced the search for concepts capable to be taken as units of psychological systems, whether consciousness or personality. Such units should integrate affective and intellectual processes, an effort that for Vygotsky culminated with his proposal of a new definition of consciousness (Zavershneva, 2016), and that for Bozhovich led to a filling of the vacuum in definitions of the psychological nature of concepts related to human affections and motivation, on which new a synthesis defined as personality was assembled.

Zaporozhets (1995) summarized well the insufficiencies of Leontiev’s approach to the study of psychological functions, including motivation:

Essentially, for a long time, we were forced to be content with the fact that some external correlations were established between activity and mental processes, for example, noting that given such and such specific characteristics of activity, or such and such a structure, such and such motivation of activity, and so forth, such and such changes in mental processes occur, although the mechanism of these changes and the very nature of these mental processes were never studied in particular. (p. 14)

The main differences between Bozhovich and Leontiev in regards to the legacy of Vygotsky were threefold. First, Bozhovich brought to light the last period of Vygotsky’s work, devoted to *perezhivanie*,

social situation of development, and the search for units of affective and intellectual processes, while Leontiev ignored these contributions of Vygotsky, maintaining as his main focus of research the study of cognitive psychological functions (Mitjáns Martínez, 2016). Second, Bozhovich stressed the idea of the psychological system strongly emphasized by Vygotsky and centered on personality as such a system. Leontiev oriented the study of psychological function as an internalized external operation, leaving emotions and the subject of the functions out of his studies. The person was Bozhovich's main concern, while the structure and function of activity was the central core of Leontiev's work. Third, Bozhovich, like Vygotsky in his final period, between 1931 and 1934, attempted to decipher the nature of psychological processes. Leontiev, on the contrary, oriented his effort to explaining the constellation of psychological concepts in terms of concrete activity with material objects. Only in his final book, *Activity, Consciousness and Personality*, did he understand senses as the relation between motives, in an attempt to advance along a new path in relation to the study of motivation.

Some concluding reflections

The rescue of Bozhovich's legacy not only represents a historical task that cannot be postponed, allowing a new step forward to be taken in the still-pending task of rescuing the history of Soviet psychology, but also, like any historical reconstruction of a legacy, it has important theoretical value for the growth of new theoretical paths related to human motivation, personality, and subjectivity within cultural-historical psychology. Bozhovich advanced Vygotsky's legacy by proposing the articulation between personality and motivation. Her theoretical advances on these topics were based on field research in education.

Bozhovich gave attention to several important theoretical questions that remained unsolved in Soviet psychology and outside of theoretical debate within cultural-historical psychology up until today. These are questions such as the ontological vacuum in the definition of human psyche as a motivational system, the early emotional relationships between adults and children, the absence of concepts capable of explaining how the human self is formed within the social fabric, and the integrative motivational synthesis from which human behavior emerges, within which the intellectual processes and emotions appear integrated.

Further, Bozhovich and her group opened up interrelated lines of research and professional practice in education oriented toward the development of children, adolescents, and youths as personalities, allowing the transcendence of the fragmentary approaches centered on intellectual functions that continue until now, directly or indirectly, to be dominant in psychology.

And, perhaps, most crucial for us today, Bozhovich took an important step forward in recognizing that personality is not a reflection of the world, but a production within cultural-social processes that are historically located. In this regard, she made explicit what was implicit in Vygotsky's final concepts, such as sense and *perezhivanie*. Bozhovich's advances in terms of motivation and personality were an important antecedent for new paths within cultural-historical psychology, such as funds of identity and subjectivity.

Notes

1. The historical fact of the split between Vygotsky and his group has not been studied in depth until now. Taking into account the growing criticism of Vygotsky by Leontiev and his Kharkov group, as well as by others in that period (Zinchenko, 2012) and the definitively different theoretical paths taken by Vygotsky and Leontiev from 1931, it is pertinent to consider the hypothesis that the split expressed theoretical differences and personal contradictions between them.
2. I did not find any work published by Bozhovich on motivation in her Kharkov period. From that period, I only found her joint paper with P. Zinchenko (1979–1980), “The psychology of acquiring factual knowledge by schoolchildren.”
3. In the former Soviet Union, the PhD degree was called “candidate of science” in an area because the title “doctor” was reserved for the degree of doctor in science, which, unlike the candidate of science, was not

defended by a thesis written on the basis of one piece of research, but by a thesis related to the researcher's own line of research on some psychological subject.

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