

“What Is Absolutely Impossible for *One* Person, Is Possible for Two” — A Historical-Methodological Study Concerning Feuerbachian Elements in the Later Works of L.S. Vygotsky¹

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Abstract. This essay examines the influence of the German materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) on the ideas of L. S. Vygotsky. It starts from the observation that, despite its continuity, Vygotsky’s affinity to Feuerbach did not always express itself in the same way in the course of his scientific career. The main emphasis then is laid on Vygotsky’s later work (1931-1934), whose elaboration was overshadowed by the radical political-ideological changes in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. I argue that due to the requirements of the new situation Vygotsky had to adopt an attitude that for its paradoxical features could be characterized as “crypto-Feuerbachianism.” The argument then is substantiated by a closer examination of two explicit references to Feuerbach in Vygotsky’s later work. I first analyze the problems one has to cope with when trying to identify the “subtext” or hidden meaning of these kinds of references, and subsequently explain the general significance of what may be called the “Feuerbach principle” in Vygotsky’s later work.

Keywords: Vygotsky, Feuerbach, Historical-political background of Vygotsky’s work, Methodological problems of identifying camouflaged sources, Crypto-Feuerbachianism in Vygotsky’s later work, Cultural-historically oriented psychology

«Что совершенно невозможно *одному* человеку в одиночку, то возможно для двух»² — историко-методологическое исследование идей Фейербаха в работах позднего периода творчества Л.С. Выготского

¹ A first, less extensive version of the study, based on an invited paper, delivered at the XIth European Conference on Developmental Psychology, Milan, Italy, August 27-31, 2003, has been available on the internet.

² [8, tom I, c. 149]

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Аннотация. В эссе рассматривается влияние немецкого философа-материалиста Людвиг Фейербаха (1804-1872) на идеи Л. С. Выготского. Статья начинается с того наблюдения, что, несмотря на свою преемственность, близость Выготского к Фейербаху не всегда проявлялась одинаково в течение его научной карьеры. Основной внимание уделяется позднему периоду творчества Выготского (1931-1934), чья научно-исследовательская работа была осложнена радикальными политико-идеологическими изменениями в Советском Союзе в начале 1930-х гг. Автор утверждает, что из-за требований новой ситуации Выготский должен был принять такую позицию, которую из-за ее парадоксальных черт можно охарактеризовать как «крипто-фейербахианство». Данный аргумент подтверждается более близким рассмотрением двух явных ссылок на Фейербаха в последние годы его научного творчества (ср. Выготский Л.С. Собрание сочинений. Т. 5, с. 230; Т. 2, с. 361). Сначала я анализирую проблемы, с которыми приходится сталкиваться при попытке идентифицировать «подтекст» или скрытый смысл подобных ссылок, а затем показываю, что в «позднем» Выготском гораздо больше «Фейербаха», чем можно предположить при первом взгляде.

Ключевые слова: Выготский, Фейербах, историко-политический контекст творчества Выготского, методологические проблемы выявления скрытых источников, крипто-Фейербахианство в позднем творчестве Выготского, культурно-историческая психология

Introduction

Not later than with the publication of L. S. Vygotsky's *Collected Works* (1987-1999), experts in "cultural-historical theory" should be acquainted with the finding that Vygotsky was not only "very familiar" with the work of the German materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) "and valued it highly," but beyond that "felt that Feuerbach's ideas could be used as a point of departure for the construction of a Marxist materialistic psychology." Nevertheless, it seems that until now this finding, originally formulated by L. A. Radzikhovskiy already in 1982 in an editorial note to the second volume of the Russian Vygotsky-work-edition (cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 2, pp. iv/489), and than reproduced in a corresponding place in the first volume of the *Collected Works* (cf. [61, p. 384]), despite its provoking implications has not found noticeable resonance. This is all the more deplorable, as the endeavor to clarify the real nature of the relation between Vygotsky and Feuerbach leads to a deeper understanding not only of Vygotsky's work itself but also of its political background.

In that, one of the most significant points is: Although Vygotsky held a throughout positive view of Feuerbach's ideas, his appreciation of the latter, as far as explicit symptoms are concerned, expressed itself in quite different ways in the course of his scientific career, whereby three periods can be discerned:

1. There are indeed noticeable indications, that already in the first period (1924 – 1926/27) Vygotsky had an inclination to that dimension of Feuerbachianism which would be prevalent in his last years (centred on the theorem that specifically human characteristics have their origin and their main developmental condition in the “community of man with man”)³. His overtly expressed attitude towards the great philosopher, however, at that time actually was determined by the mid 1920s debate about the importance of Feuerbach's views for the theoretical foundation of a Marxist materialistic psychology. This debate was part of an evaluation of G.V. Plekhanov's (1856-1918) position in regard to the psycho-physical problem⁴, a position that essentially based on the pertinent theorems of Feuerbach (cf. f. i. [17; 29, p. 11]). Plekhanov, the “Father of Russian Marxism,” had become an adherent of “Germany's Spinoza”⁵ in the mid 1890s and subsequently was a militant advocate of Feuerbach's ideas, in that being influential also on V. I. Lenin (cf. *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*). However, for a better understanding of the “early” Vygotsky's “Plekhanov-Feuerbachianism” one has to take into account not only the writings of Plekhanov, which Vygotsky is referring to (f. i. *Basic Problems of Marxism [Osnovnye voprosy marksizma]*)⁶, but also the literary and editorial work of A. M. Deborin (1881-1963), who had been a disciple of Plekhanov and was very influential in Soviet-Russian philosophy until the end of the 1920s⁷. Deborin not only referred to Feuerbach in his own writings, but published a comprehensive book about Feuerbach in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the latter's death. Furthermore, between 1923 and 1926 he edited, together with L.A. Aksel'rod-Ortodoks and under the overall control of D.B. Riazanov (director of the Marx-Engels-Institute), three volumes of selected Feuerbach writings [10], with a remarkable high print run for

³ See for example in Vygotsky's 1924 pilot-article on the psychology and pedagogy of handicapped children his line of argument, which starts with a quotation from the 1911 Russian edition of P. Natorp's *Sozialpädagogik. Theorie der Willenserziehung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft [Socialpedagogy. Theory of the Education of Will on the Basis of Community]* [54, p. 24] — N.B.: Whereas in the Russian Vygotsky-work-edition there can be detected only “slight” changes (cf. [58, pp. 78 f.]), the English work-edition is presenting a downright parody of the original version of the respective passage (cf. [60, Vol. 2, p. 89]).

⁴ N.B.: In the German-Russian tradition the psycho-physical problem goes beyond the narrowly circumscribed “mind-body-problem,” it applies to the psyche's relations to *all* parts and moments of the physical (material) world and its immanent relationships.

⁵ Feuerbach had been honored by this epithet in the zenith of his popularity in Germany at the end of the 1840s (cf. [36, Vol. 1, pp. 382 f.]).

⁶ In some cases there is required a meticulous “philological” work to identify the correct source of Vygotsky's references to Plekhanov. In this respect, the reader should be cautious of the information given in either the Russian or the English versions of the Vygotsky-work-edition.

⁷ For a biographical sketch of Deborin see [26, pp. 464-467]; resp. [27, pp. 359 ff.].

each volume⁸. And by all of these activities Deborin contributed much to the propagation of Feuerbachian thought in Soviet Russia around the mid 1920s (cf. [47, p. 496]). All in all, when assessing the then pertinent literature⁹, one gets the impression, that Feuerbach's prophetic words, that his time was still to come (cf. [6, p. 85]), finally had become true, though not, as he had hoped, in Germany. Perhaps the general atmosphere among the Russian intelligentsia in the mid 1920s may be characterized best with the words, used by Fr. Engels 40 years before in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, when he described the situation among the Young-Hegelians caused by the publication of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* in 1841: "All of us were at the moment Feuerbachians [Wir alle waren momentan Feuerbachianer]" (cf. [40, Vol. 21, p. 272])¹⁰.

The writing of Feuerbach most frequently referred to by Soviet psychologists in that period was "Against the Dualism of Body and Soul, Flesh and Spirit." This programmatic treatise had been published originally in 1846 within the second volume of Feuerbach's *Sämmtliche Werke [Complete Works]*. A first Russian translation was released in 1908 together with another article by Feuerbach in a volume titled "On Dualism and Immortality [O dualizme i bessmertii]"¹¹, and a second time it appeared in 1923 within the first of the three volumes of Feuerbach writings edited by Deborin and Aksel'rod-Ortodoks.¹² Lengthy quotations from this treatise can be found not only in articles by K.N. Kornilov [30] and A.R. Luriiia [39], but also in the polemical brochure *Psychology or Reflexology? [Psikhologiiia ili refleksologiiia?]*, published by G.I. Chelpanov in 1926. In that, it is interesting that Chelpanov, former director of the Moscow Institute of Psychology and still the militant standard-bearer of the "older psychology," crowned his quotation with the conclusion that from the whole passage "it is easy to recognize, that Feuerbach's humanism is beyond doubt a kind of Spinozism" (cf. [4, p. 33]). Herewith, on the one hand Chelpanov was seemingly in accordance with Plekhanov, confirming Feuerbach's epithet "Germany's Spinoza." On the other hand he was pursuing the diversionist goal of playing Feuerbach off against Marx, whom he reproaches of "empirical dualism [ëmpiricheskogo dualizma]" (cf. [4, p. 34]).

However, for my present concerns it is more important to take note of Luria's reference to Feuerbach's treatise in his 1925-article "Psychoanalysis as a System of Monistic Psychology," where he expresses his high esteem for Feuerbach as follows:

⁸ Cf. [1]. This source also gives a detailed overview of the contents of each volume.

⁹ Important sources to be considered are: [4; 5; 6; 17; 30; 37; 39; 43; 49; 50].

¹⁰ Unfortunately, in the English translation the ambiguity of the by Engels used word "momentan" inevitably gets lost, it can mean both "immediately" and "(only) momentary."

¹¹ Cf. [5; 8, p. 656/660; 47, p. 476; 50].

¹² A third time it was included in the first volume of *Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh*, both volumes published in 1955 (i. e., during the "thaw"-period). Deplorably, until now there does not exist any official English translation of this in many respects very important writing of Feuerbach.

Feuerbach brilliantly anticipated many of the concepts of the new psychology. His arguments for a monistic approach to the individual, about feelings, about the relationship between cerebral activity and the organs of the body were altogether a classic prototype of a sound and profound approach to the problem of the individual personality. See especially his essay “Against the Dualism of Body and Soul, Flesh and Spirit,” in [Works] (GIZ, 1923), vol. 1, pp. 146 ff. (quoted after [38, p. 48, note 12]; for the Russian original see [39, p. 58, fn. 1]).

In conclusion, it seems to be part of a more general trend that Vygotsky expresses his enthusiasm for Feuerbach’s “psychological materialism” in his great 1926/27-essay on the historical significance of the crisis in psychology and in his closely to this essay related article “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious.” Here the name of Feuerbach is the password for the access to Vygotsky’s program for the systematic reorganization of psychology as a whole on a strictly materialistic base (see [62, pp. 116/322/324/327])¹³.

2. In the second period (1927/28 – 1930/31), dedicated to the elaboration and re-elaboration of what usually is referred to as “cultural historical theory”¹⁴, Feuerbach, at first glance, seems to have lost for Vygotsky his programmatic relevance. Explicit references to him apparently only serve as a methodological corrective against an impending deviation (not only of other scholars but also of Vygotsky himself) toward an idealism of the Hegelian kind (cf. [59, pp. 65 f.; 63, p. 172]). However, there is one significant symptom that Vygotsky had not only taken a stroll along the shore of the “fiery brook” but really had “passed through it”¹⁵: his (since 1928) notoriously consequent use of the formulations “psychological processes [psikhologicheskie protsessy]” and “psychological functions [psikhologicheskie funktsii]” instead of the mainstream versions “psychic processes [psikhicheskie protsessy]” and “psychic functions [psikhicheskie funktsii]” (also favoured by I.P. Pavlov). As meanwhile it seems to be generally recognized in the relevant literature, that there is such a “strange quirk” of Vygotsky, which has to be respected as such, the systematic (i. e., conceptual) reason for this peculiar terminological deviation apparently has not been grasped yet. However, this reason can easily be found out by consulting the already

¹³ Though “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious [Psikhika, soznanie i bessoznatel’noe]” was published only in 1930 (cf. [55]), its virtual origin evidently has to be dated back into the period of 1925-27, when the discussion about the theoretical-methodological fundamentals of the “new” (i.e., Marxist materialistic) psychology had reached its first peak (cf. [29, 30, 31]). It seems most plausible that the article, at least in its essential parts, has been elaborated in the atmosphere of the “crisis”-project. This view, which I am advocating since more than a decade (cf. [26, pp. 134/399; 27, pp. 113 f./151; 28, pp. 46 f.]), has recently found vigorous support in E. Iu. Zavershneva’s profound analyses of textual materials preserved in the Vygotsky family archive (cf. [69, 70]), and the on these analyses based reconstructive work (cf. [71]).

¹⁴ The problem of the correct labeling of Vygotsky’s approach is discussed in detail in [22].

¹⁵ For this play on words, which bases on the literal meaning of the surname “Feuerbach” (= “Fiery brook”), see [40, Vol. 1, p. 27].

mentioned article “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious,” whose central argument is the statement that, “when psychic [psikhicheskikh] processes are replaced by psychological [psikhologicheskikh] processes, the application of Feuerbach’s viewpoint in psychology becomes possible” [62, p. 116]¹⁶.

3. In the last period (1931-34) Vygotsky’s relation to Feuerbach is overshadowed by the aftermath of the radical changes which took place within the scientific life in the Soviet Union in 1930/31, putting a definitive end to what might be called the “golden age” of Feuerbachianism. In that, the respective change in the general attitude towards Feuerbach was not brought about by a detection of hitherto undiscovered “flaws” or “mistakes” in his works — rather, it was just a “collateral effect” of a political-ideological drama, which came off in a relatively short period of time but had far reaching consequences. It took its start in June 1930 during the approaches to the 16th convention of the All-Union’s Communist Party (Bolsheviks)¹⁷, increased between July and October 1930, culminated about the turn of the year, and came to a provisional end with the dismissal of Deborin from his positions as chief editor of the periodical *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* [*Under the Banner of Marxism*] and vice-director of the Marx-Engels-Institute in the end of January 1931. Half a month later, D.B. Riazanov, the till then director of that institute and meritorious chief editor of the complete works of Marx and Engels (MEGA) was arrested, and finally the whole procedure was “crowned” in April 1931 by merging the Marx-Engels-Institute with the Lenin-Institute to create the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Institute as the henceforth undisputed grail keeper of Marxism-Leninism.¹⁸

And it was one of the inevitable consequences of Deborin’s fall, that the high valuations he had given of Feuerbach (f. i., declaring him dialectical materialist in the strict sense, and characterizing Marxism as nothing other than a kind of Feuerbachianism) had to be “corrected” towards a lessening of the latter’s importance. In that (as already foreshadowed in M. Mitin’s talk on January, 1st of 1931), Feuerbach’s official “downgrading” did not end up in a total loss of

¹⁶ For the underlying Russian version cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 1, p. 141, resp. [55, p. 55].

¹⁷ Later renamed in Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

¹⁸ As the “plot” of this drama is too complex as to be told in three sentences thereby taking into consideration all relevant aspects, the reader may consult for a first overview the present author’s detailed report in his *Feuerbach, Vygotski & Co.* (cf. [24, pp. 79-86/139-142]). In covering the period until October 1930, this report is based to a large extent on the results of the literary studies of Simon Rawidowicz, a contemporary witness of the 1930 events (cf. [47, pp. 497 ff.]). For the time after October 1930, however, it is based exclusively on the author’s own research. Readers, interested in a complete reconstruction of the events touched upon, may study the following sources: Mitin, Ral’tsevich & Iudin [42]; Deborin et al. [7]; Ral’tsevich [46]; Riazanov (Sept./Oct. 1930/1997) [48]; Biuro iacheiki VKP(b) Instituta Krasnoi Professury Filosofii i Estestvoznaniia [3]; Wolkogonow [67, pp. 338 f.]; Biuro iacheiki IKP F. i E. [2]*; Mitin [41]*; TsK VKP(b) [52]*; Stein [51]; Hecker [18]. – N.B.: With respect to the correct dating of the three Russian sources marked with *, it has to be considered that the October-December 1930 issue of *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* (No. 10-12) was not released before the end of January or (more likely) the beginning of February 1931.

reputation, but he was just put back into the role, assigned to him by Engels in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*: “John Baptist of Marxism,” not less but not more either.

Under these conditions, the enterprise of showing explicitly the heuristic value of Feuerbach’s ideas in regard to scientific topics, located outside of the special sphere of interest of Marx and/or Engels (or Lenin) but nevertheless of some significance for the internal completion of Marxism, was a quite risky one. It could easily be “misunderstood,” giving rise to the incrimination of the respective scholar of still being a partisan of Deborin and his “menshevizing idealism” (cf. [53, pp. 302 f.]). As a consequence, when studying the later work of Vygotsky, as far as it is published, we are confronted with a peculiar paradox: On the one hand, there is a far-reaching overlap of Vygotsky’s lines of argument with ideas of Feuerbach, especially in the area of developmental psychology (compare for instance [63, pp. 216 and 231, with [14, pp. 82 ff.]) but also in the framework of defectological investigations (cf. [61, pp. 198 ff./218 f.]) and in the area of psycholinguistics (cf. [60, pp. 47/285])¹⁹; on the other hand, there are conspicuously few explicit references (strictly speaking, only two) to the great philosopher in this later work. Thus, in regard to the period of 1931-1934, the real extent of Vygotsky’s affinity to Feuerbach can be revealed only by a painstaking and time-consuming philological analysis — an analysis for which not only the knowledge of the respective work of Vygotsky (including the pertinent archival material) but also an ample familiarity with the work of Feuerbach is the absolutely necessary precondition.

In the remainder of this study, I will focus on what might be called the “crypto-Feuerbachianism” of the “later” Vygotsky (1931-34). And in doing so, I am pursuing a double aim:

On one hand, I want to give an idea of the methodological difficulties one is confronted with if one does not uncritically accept the, first by Radzikhovsky formulated, assertion of a close affinity of Vygotsky to Feuerbach as an “insider’s” expertise, but tries to prove the validity of this assertion. On the other hand, I will present data (both in the main text and in more detail in the appendix to this study) which, in my opinion, are compelling enough to prove that there is even more to this assertion than Radzikhovsky realized.

As a starting point I have chosen the two passages in the later work of Vygotsky where there is an obvious reference to Feuerbach, in order to reveal the hidden meaning of these kinds of references, and subsequently explain the general

¹⁹ In regard to the passage in the first chapter of *Thinking and Speech* it is not sufficiently clear, if Vygotsky is “quoting” Feuerbach directly or via V. I. Lenin, who in his survey of Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (cf. [33, p. 246]) is quoting from Feuerbach’s “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” (cf. [13, p. 43]).

significance of what can be called the “Feuerbach principle” in Vygotsky’s later work.

Two Quasi-Quotations Charged with Problems

The first of these passages is the final word of Vygotsky’s introduction to E. Gracheva’s book on the education and instruction of severely retarded children which was published in 1932, and the second passage is from the final part of Vygotsky’s posthumous work *Thinking and Speech*²⁰.

The conclusion of Vygotsky’s introduction to Gracheva’s book reads as follows:

*Only social education can lead severely retarded children through the process of becoming human by eliminating the solitude of idiocy and severe retardation. L. Feuerbach’s wonderful phrase, might be taken as the motto to the study of development in abnormal children: “That which is impossible for one, is possible for two.” Let us add: That which is impossible on the level of individual development becomes possible on the level of social development [61, pp. 218 f.].*²¹

And at the end of *Thinking and Speech* we can read: “In consciousness, the word is what — in Feuerbach’s words — is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two. The word is the most direct manifestation of the historical nature of human consciousness” [60, p. 285]).

As clear as these two references to Feuerbach appear to be at first glance, a closer look shows that they are charged with problems. First, we notice that in both cases the source of the reference is not specified, so that, if we are not Feuerbach experts, we have great difficulty in examining whether what Vygotsky aims to express with his quasi-quotations really corresponds to Feuerbach’s original intent. Second, although the source is not specified, it seems that Vygotsky in both passages is referring to one and the same original statement by Feuerbach, but is imparting a different sense to it, corresponding to two completely different thematic contexts. However, in doing so, Vygotsky not only gives an impressive illustration of his own

²⁰ N.B.: It is exactly this passage, from which Radzikhovsky is taking a start for his assertion that Vygotsky “was very familiar” with Feuerbach’s work.

²¹ According to the respective archival material communicated to the present author by E. Iu. Zavershneva, Vygotsky properly had planned to put “L. Feuerbach’s wonderful phrase” as the epigraph to his article “The Collective as a Factor in the Development of the Abnormal Child,” to be published in 1931. But he refrained, apparently realizing that it would not be beneficial to the cause to show up at that moment as a defiant Feuerbachian. However, in December of 1931 Deborin wrote a self-critical open letter to the newspaper *Pravda*, remorsefully admitting all the mistakes he had been criticized for, as far as they concerned his assessment of the specifics of V. I. Lenin’s contribution to the further development of Marxism. After that kowtow he was permitted to continue at least his work within the institutional framework of the Academy of Science (he had been “elected” academician in February 1929). Thus, it seems that in 1932 Vygotsky dared to launch a “trial balloon,” presenting Feuerbach’s “wonderful phrase” at the end of an introduction to another author’s book — a maneuver, that in all its aspects is open to a “dialectical” interpretation.

reflections on the relationship between meaning and sense (cf. [60, pp. 275 ff.]), but also provokes the suspicion that there must be something wrong with his references to Feuerbach; that is, either in the introduction to Gracheva's book or in the last chapter of *Thinking and Speech* — if not in both cases — there must be a misinterpretation of the respective original statement of Feuerbach.

“Man with Man — the Unity of I and Thou — Is God”

This suspicion seems to be justified, when we reintegrate Feuerbach's statement in its original context, namely paragraph 12 of the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (first published in German in 1843, first Russian publication in 1923). Because, in doing so, we come to realize that in this paragraph Feuerbach is dealing with a topic that seems to be quite far from the problems Vygotsky is dealing with. It is Feuerbach's point, by referring to “a striking example,” namely that of the natural sciences, to demonstrate the fundamental

truth that man's conception of God is the human individual's conception of his own species, that God as the total of all realities or perfections is nothing other than the total of the attributes of the species — dispersed among men and realizing themselves in the course of world history — succinctly combined for the benefit of the limited individual (quoted after [13, p. 17]).

An idea which Feuerbach expands as follows:

*The domain of the natural sciences is, because of its quantitative size, completely beyond the capacity of the individual to view and measure. Who is able to count the stars in the sky and at the same time the muscles and nerves in the body of a caterpillar? <...> Who is able to observe simultaneously the difference of height and depth on the moon and at the same time observe the differences of the innumerable ammonites and terebratula? But what the individual does not know and cannot do all of mankind together knows and can do. <...> While one person notices what is happening on the moon or Uranus, another observes Venus or the intestines of the caterpillar or some other place <...> Indeed, while one person observes this star from the position of Europe, another observes the same star from the position of America. What is absolutely impossible for one person alone is possible for two (cf. *ibid.* — rectified after the original [German] version [cf. [12, Vol. 9, pp. 279 f.]).²²*

²² Besides the fact that there are only lamentably few translations of the writings of Feuerbach, understanding his ideas is rendered even more difficult for the English reading public by the fact that these translations are sometimes inaccurate. Thus, quite paradoxically, the *Collected Works* versions of Vygotsky's quasi-quotations of Feuerbach in both cases are closer to the German original wording than the official English translation of the *Principles of the*

If Vygotsky is singling out precisely this last phrase, in order to emphasize that the basic idea of his own conception about the education of severely retarded children is already anticipated by the conceptions of Feuerbach, the reproach of misleading the reader (i.e., misusing Feuerbach's authority for the propagation of an idea which is quite far from Feuerbach's original conceptions) can only be refuted by proving that the selected phrase serves only as a code for other passages in the work of Feuerbach which correspond much better to what Vygotsky is aiming at. And in fact, it is possible to furnish evidence for that interpretation, because there are at least three more paragraphs in the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* which could be conceived as a further "expansion" of Feuerbach's basic idea in the direction of what was "properly meant" by Vygotsky.

Thus paragraph 59 reads as follows:

The single man for himself does not possess the essence of man, neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community²³, in the unity of man with man — a unity, however, which is based only on the reality of the distinction between I and thou (cf. [13, p. 71]).

And paragraph 60 reads: "Solitude is finiteness and limitation; community is freedom and infinity. Man for himself is man (in the ordinary sense); man with man — the unity of I and thou — is God" (ibid.).

And eventually in paragraph 63, Feuerbach stresses that already in his *Essence of Christianity* (first published in German in 1841, first Russian publication in 1908, included 1926 in the second volume of *Sochineniia*) he has identified the "secret of communal and social life, the secret of the necessity of the 'thou' for an 'I'." For him, the explanation of this "secret" is

the truth that no being — be it man, God, mind, or ego — is for itself alone a true, perfect, and absolute being, that truth and perfection are only the connection and unity of beings equal in their essence. The highest and last principle of philosophy is, therefore, the unity of man with man. All essential relations <...> are only different kinds and ways of this unity [13, p. 72]).

Philosophy of the Future, which reads: "What is absolutely impossible for one man alone to accomplish is possible for two men to achieve" [13, p. 17]. Consequently, for the sake of a more authentic appreciation of Feuerbach's ideas, a (responsibly realized) rectification of problematic terms and figures of speech in the official English translations is inevitable here and there.

²³ The German term used by Feuerbach is "Gemeinschaft."

Following this explicit reference to the *Essence of Christianity*, we find no less than two passages that fit very well with the phrase, quoted by Vygotsky. In the first passage Feuerbach says:

Thus man is the God of man. That he is, he has to thank Nature; that he is man, he has to thank man; spiritually as well as physically he can achieve nothing without his fellow-man. Four hands can do more than two, but also four eyes can see more than two. And this combined power is distinguished not only in quantity but also in quality from that which is solitary. In isolation human power is limited, in combination it is infinite. <...> Wit, acumen, imagination, feeling as distinguished from sensation, reason as a subjective faculty, — all these so-called powers of the soul are powers of humanity, not of man as an individual; they are products of culture, products of human society (quoted after [14, p. 83]).

And in the other passage we can read:

Community enhances the force of emotion, heightens confidence. What we are unable to do alone we are able to do with others. The sense of solitude is the sense of limitation, the sense of community is the sense of freedom [14, p. 124, fn.].

That Vygotsky, when referring to Feuerbach, has in mind precisely these ideas becomes very clear when we go back to the starting point of our “philological” excursion, that is, Vygotsky’s introduction to Gracheva’s book, and have a look at the complete context in which Vygotsky’s reference to Feuerbach’s “wonderful phrase” is integrated.

A Revealing Textual Comparison

In the final part of this introduction, Vygotsky is first reporting on an empirical study, realized by V. S. Krasussskii, which had shown that free collectives of severely retarded children are formed according to the principle of heterogeneity of intellectual levels (cf. [61, p. 217]). He then discusses the views of Edouard Séguin, a prominent representative of 19th century curative pedagogy, and finally gives the following summary:

The developmental path for a severely retarded child lies through collaborative activity, the social help of another human being, who from the first is his mind, his will, his activities. This proposition also corresponds entirely with the normal path of development for a child. The developmental path for a severely retarded child lies

through relationships and collaborative activity, with other humans. *For precisely this reason, the social education of severely retarded children reveals to us possibilities which might seem outright Utopian from the viewpoint of purely biologically based physiological education <...> The term idiot <...> literally means solitarius, a lone man: He is really alone with his sensations, without any intellectual or moral will. <...> Contemporary scientific research is wholeheartedly proving <...> that the source of idiocy is solitude. <...> In this respect, as we have already said, it is the social education of severely retarded children which becomes the sole sustainable and scientific path toward their education. In addition, it alone is capable of recreating the absent functions where they are not, because of a biological sense of inadequacy in the child. Only social education can lead severely retarded children through the process of becoming human by eliminating the solitude of idiocy and severe retardation. L. Feuerbach's wonderful phrase, might be taken as the motto to the study of development in abnormal children: "That which is impossible for one, is possible for two." [61, pp. 218 f].*

In conclusion, Vygotsky's reference to Feuerbach's "wonderful phrase," then, in no way can be seen as misleading. Rather, this reference is based on what I. Kant has called a "synthesis," by which, "in the most general meaning," he understood "the act of putting various presentations together and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition" [19, p. 37]. In that, the difficulty obviously lies in the fact that this process cannot be simply reversed. That is, we cannot readily infer from the result of the "synthesis" back to those "various and manifold presentations" which are its basic material. Rather, this original material must be known in advance to identify the synthesis in question as a synthesis at all. In the present case, this means that in order to understand what Vygotsky is aiming at with his reference to "L. Feuerbach's wonderful phrase," prior knowledge of the writings of Feuerbach or at least a sufficient familiarity with the central ideas of his philosophy are a basic requirement.

An Attempt at Decoding

The importance of knowing Feuerbach's work becomes even more clear, when we try to figure out the meaning of the quasi-quotation at the end of *Thinking and Speech*.

Here, if we take the literal wording, Vygotsky should also refer to paragraph 12 of Feuerbach's *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. But, as follows from our preceding analysis, this would make no real sense.

A second perusal of the relevant writings of Feuerbach, however, reveals that Vygotsky at the end of *Thinking and Speech* obviously is trying to put together

certain reflections of Feuerbach on the relationship between thinking and speech, as put forward in his critique of Hegel's philosophy, with another basic idea of Feuerbach which also can be found in the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*.

In fact, it is paragraph 41 where we can read:

Not alone, but only with others, does one reach notions and reason in general. Two human beings are needed for the generation of man — of the spiritual as well as of the physical man; the community of man with man is the first principle and criterion of truth and generality [13, pp. 58 f.].

And in his *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* (first published in German in 1839, first Russian publication in 1923 within the first volume of *Sochineniia*) Feuerbach writes: "Language is nothing else than the *realization of the species*, the mediation of the 'I' with the 'You' in order to manifest, by eliminating their individual separateness, the unity of the species" (quoted after [15, p. 63] — rectified after the original [German] version [cf. [12, Vol. 9, p. 27]]).

Every verbal representation of a thought is therefore

not a mediation of the thought within the thought and for the thought itself, but a mediation through language between thinking, in so far as it is mine, and the thinking of another person, in so far as it is his, <...> a mediation through which I prove that my thought is not mine but thought in and for itself so that it can just as well be that of the other person as it can be mine (cf. loc. cit., p. 64 — rectified after the original [German] version [cf. [12, Vol. 9, pp. 28 f.]])

In other words: The verbal utterance of a thought is "the means through which I free my thought from the form of 'mine-ness' in order that the other person may recognize it as his own" (cf. loc. cit., p. 66 — rectified after the original [German] version [cf. [12, Vol. 9, p. 31]]).

In conclusion: When Vygotsky is "synthesizing" all this to the statement that, according to Feuerbach, in consciousness the word is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two, he is certainly correct in essentials, although it might seem illegitimate to present this statement as a quasi-quotation.

A Plea for a Change of Perspectives

Briefly summarizing, we can state that the demonstrated method, to depart from explicit references to Feuerbach in order to get a better understanding of Feuerbachian elements in the later work of Vygotsky, is quite successful. After all, by

using this method we can show that there is much more “Feuerbach“ in the “later” Vygotsky than can be assumed at first glance — a finding, that gets even more substantiated when the research is not restricted to already published writings but is extended to the material preserved in the Vygotsky family archive (cf. the appendix to this study). But at the same time we have to admit that this is only a rather limited success, and furthermore a success which can only be reached under certain circumstances: Be it free accessible published texts, be it archival material, the method merely works in those cases where we have plain references to Feuerbach, and, moreover, we must have at least a rough idea, *where* to search in his writings.

Thus, inevitably the question arises whether it would not be wiser to take the opposite way right from the start, that is, getting first thoroughly familiar with the writings of Feuerbach and the psychological views which are contained in them, and then examining step by step Vygotsky’s work, to find out in what way it contains, overtly or concealed, Feuerbachian elements. Indeed, this seems to be not only the more meaningful but also the more efficient method (cf. [21; 23; 24; 25]).

In what follows, I will confine myself to the most important findings of this kind of approach:

First of all, we have to recognize that nobody else but Feuerbach himself was the “Feuerbach of Psychology” — and this not only in the figurative but in the literal sense. Starting with his early *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (first published anonymously in 1830 [cf. [12, Vol. 1]]) and ending with his last work on moral philosophy, commonly known under the title *Eudemonism* (finished in 1868, first published posthumously in 1874 (cf. [8, tom I, pp. 578-641; 16])), we realize that the concern with psychological questions, although not the dominant leitmotif, nevertheless is pervasive in Feuerbach’s scientific work. Even his critique of Hegel is in some essential aspects formulated from a psychological point of view (a fact stressed by Plekhanov already in 1897).

It is not just that Feuerbach’s permanent advancing of “inner reasons” in the last analysis always turns out to be a psychological argumentation; there are two comprehensive treatises as well which reveal themselves at first sight in their basic topics as psychological writings. And more than that, after a closer analysis they can be characterized as programmatic essays in which, mediated by a profound critique of various idealistic conceptions, are formulated clearly and unmistakably the theoretical-methodological principles of a strictly materialistic psychology. The first of these treatises, pointed to already in the introductory part of this study, is entitled *Against the Dualism of Body and Soul, Flesh and Spirit* (cf. [8, tom I, pp. 211-238; 12, Vol. 10]), and, as we remember, it is precisely this treatise, which Luria is praising in his 1925 article about psychoanalysis as a system of monistic psychology,

and which Vygotsky is referring to and taking quotations from in his famous essay on the historical significance of the crisis in psychology and in his (closely to this essay related) article “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious.” Unfortunately, as mentioned before, till now there is no English translation of this in many respects very important writing of Feuerbach. The other treatise is entitled *About Spiritualism and Materialism, Especially with Regard to the Freedom of the Will* (cf. [8, tom I, pp. 442-577; 12, Vol. 11]; likewise no English translation available). Its original German copy had been published in 1866 and was repeatedly quoted by Plekhanov at different occasions, its Russian translation then being published for the first time also in 1923 within the first volume of the Russian Feuerbach-edition. That Vygotsky was familiar with it, can be inferred from some of his arguments in his 1924 pilot-article on the psychology and pedagogy of handicapped children, the same being valid for “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious.”

Apart from these two doubtless psychological writings there are many passages in Feuerbach’s work where he declares himself *expressis verbis* for psychology. In addition to this, various of his writings reflect essential psychological insights in such an impressive way that we can say without exaggeration that the complete works of Feuerbach contain a system of guidelines and statements of immediate relevance for the design and the realization of a materialistic, cultural-historically oriented psychology. In that, his general characterization of the “so-called powers of the soul” as “products of culture, products of human society” (cf. [14, pp. 83 f.]) as well as his special reflections on the basis and genesis of the human conscience (cf. [8, tom I, pp. 627-633; 12, Vol. 7, pp. 137, 139, 141; 16, pp. 419-425]) could serve as first order testimonials — not to forget his striking aphorism: “... man, who directly arose from nature, was still only a pure natural, not human being. Man [as human] is a product of man, of culture, of history” (quoted after [12, Vol. 10, p.178]; transl. and insertion in brackets P. K.)²⁴.

The “Feuerbach Principle” in Vygotsky’s Later Work

Having all this in mind, what then is meant by the “Feuerbach principle” in Vygotsky’s later work?

²⁴ As already noted elsewhere (cf. [22, p. 10, fn. 30]), Vygotsky’s nearness to Feuerbach in this point (though Feuerbach is not explicitly mentioned) is demonstrated very nicely in M. G. Iaroshevskii’s epilogue to the sixth volume of the *Collected Works*, where he, in regard to the Russian version of “Tool and Symbol” („Orudie i znak v razvitii rebenka“), is talking about Vygotsky’s conception of the “initial integration of the child into the microsocal community [mikrosotsial’nuu obshchnost’] in the midst of which occurs the miracle [chudo] of converting his natural, very simple functions into higher, cultural-historical functions” (quoted after Coll. Works, Vol. 6, p. 247; for the Russian version cf. *Sobr. soch.*, tom 6, p. 331).

Whereas for Vygotsky as the author of *The Crisis in Psychology* and “Mind [Psyche], Consciousness, [and] the Unconscious” Feuerbach is an undisputable authority in regard to basic (mainly methodologically oriented) questions of a materialistic-monistic psychology in general,²⁵ for the “later” Vygotsky Feuerbach’s ideas serve as a *guideline* for his own, now more specialized theoretical and practical work and as a *medium* in the analysis and evaluation of the relevant literature. That is, the “later” Vygotsky, not just when reading the contemporary psychological literature but also when re-evaluating earlier authors, is looking “through Feuerbach’s spectacles” or, if one prefers the prism-metaphor, as it was sometimes used by Vygotsky: His reception of contemporary authors and the re-evaluation of earlier authors is “refracted” by the “prism” of Feuerbach’s views.

In regard to the contemporary literature, this becomes very clear not just in his references to the findings of V. S. Krasusskii (cf. [61, pp. 200 f./217]) and the findings of D. McCarthy (cf. [64, p. 87]) but is even more striking in the case of his references to the findings of S. Fajans (cf. [63, pp. 233 ff.])²⁶ and the findings of W. Peters (cf. [63, p. 236])²⁷. And in regard to earlier authors, this Feuerbach-determined attitude shows, as we have already seen, quite clearly in Vygotsky’s reference to the work of E. Séguin. But his well-known references to Tolstoy’s and Dostoyevsky’s writings in the last chapter of *Thinking and Speech* (cf. [60, pp. 268 f./271 f.]) could likewise be used as examples.

In sum: The “later” Vygotsky’s relations to Feuerbach could be characterized most strikingly by means of that Vygotskian “keyword” according to which “there is always a background thought, a hidden subtext in our speech” ([60, p. 281]). In this sense, Feuerbach’s reflections (especially his reflections on the fundamental significance of the “Thou” for the “I” and the synergetic effects of the community of man with man)²⁸ have to be qualified as a “hidden subtext” to Vygotsky’s explicitly unfolded conceptions. That is not to say that Vygotsky’s conceptions could be simply reduced to the psychological ideas of Feuerbach or could be directly derived from them. But the turn to Feuerbach’s psychological approach leads, as I have tried to

²⁵ See for that also in the appendix to this study the extract from the preparatory work for Vygotsky’s paper on psychological systems, delivered in October 1930.

²⁶ For a better understanding the reader should use either the Russian source (i.e., [57, pp. 305-308]) or the official German translation (cf. [68, pp. 142-148]), because in the English translation Vygotsky’s “Feuerbachianism” is veiled by an inappropriate terminology (the author of the translation apparently did not grasp the meaning of the Russian term “obshchnost” which is equivalent to the German word “Gemeinschaft” and should be translated as “community” and not as “communication”).

²⁷ Here again, for a better understanding the reader should use either the Russian source ([loc. cit., pp. 309 f.]) or the official German translation ([loc. cit., pp. 149 f.]), because the English version is once more inappropriate (this time, in addition to the constant incorrect translation as “communication”, “obshchnost” is translated twice as “intercourse”).

²⁸ For an adequate understanding of Vygotsky’s conception of the “zone of proximal development” it has to be noticed, that Feuerbach stresses the importance of the “*sensory given Thou*” (“das sinnlich gegebene Du”/ “chuvstvenno dannogo Ty” — cf. [8, tom 1, p. 190; 12, Vol. 9, p. 324]).

show, to a more profound understanding of the later work of Vygotsky. This statement holds especially true as well for *his* conception of “interiorization”²⁹ as for his theory about the “interaction of ideal and rudimentary forms” in the development of higher, specifically human characteristics and forms of the child’s activity (cf. [65]) — a theory which so easily can be identified as a developmental-psychological specification of Feuerbach’s central idea of “man being the God of man,” and which notwithstanding has been so terribly misinterpreted by A. N. Leontiev (cf. [34])³⁰. Consequently, the project of a systematic disclosure and analysis of Vygotsky’s later work implies inevitably the disclosure of the system of the psychological ideas of Feuerbach.

Final Remarks

At first glance, the perspective opened up by the present author seems to have only a slim chance to be realized by scholars from Anglophone countries, as there is only a lamentably small part of Feuerbach’s œuvre available in English translation, whereat in addition these translations have to be scrutinized in any special case in respect to their reliability³¹. But having a closer look at the advances of Vygotskian studies since the 1978 publication of *Mind in Society* until the present, it can be stated that there is no need to maintain such a pessimistic view. In fact, in the meantime it has become a commonly accepted belief, that for a serious involvement in Vygotskian studies there is required at least a certain degree of bilingualism, to enable the respective researcher to make use of the Russian sources (this maxim, of course, does not apply only to native English-speakers). Thus, nowadays there should be already a good quantity of scholars, who are able to utilize the official Russian translation of the pertinent writings of Feuerbach, in that being in exact the same position as the very Vygotsky had been, who might have read the writings of Feuerbach also in their original language (as f. i. Chelpanov, Shpet, Deborin, and Kornilov did), but, as it seems, chiefly made use of their Russian translation (this preference generating the problem, that sometimes there may be not found a perfect

²⁹ Compare the relevant passages in the fifth chapter of the *History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions* ([56, pp. 144 ff.], respectively Coll. Works, Vol. 4, pp. 105 f.) with Feuerbach’s reflections on the genesis of the human conscience ([8, tom 1, pp. 627-631; 12, Vol. 7, p. 137; 16, pp. 419-423]).

³⁰ In the a decade ago published English version of the respective (written in 1936) article (cf. Leontiev, 2005), the unsuitability of Leontiev’s critique of Vygotsky’s conceptions (denouncing them as borrowed from E. Durkheim’s idealistic sociology) is partially masked by a (once again) inappropriate terminology (for instance, the difference between “socialny” [= social] and “obshchestvenny” [= societal] is not taken into account). — For a detailed assessment of Leontiev’s article cf. [20].

³¹ Comparing the three English translations referred to in the present study, I am taking the view that the translation of *The Essence of Christianity* is the most authentic of them. It was made by Marian Evans, who for the publication in 1854 had to use the male pseudonym “George Eliot.” In this context it must not be withheld that already in the early 1840s the *Essence of Christianity* had found a remarkable resonance especially in the female reading public; Jenny von Westphalen, the wife of Karl Marx, being one of the prominent witnesses for that (cf. Marx’ letter to Feuerbach, dated the third of October 1843; [40, Vol. 27, p. 421]).

match between Vygotsky's quasi-quotations and the original German source and/or its English translation)³². Of course, being trilingual would be even more favorable, and this not just for achieving a closer familiarity with the psychological dimension in the work of Feuerbach but also in order to get, by reading the original literature, a more authentic understanding of all the other representatives of German philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy, to whom Vygotsky is referring more or less frequently, and whose ideas (not always being correctly interpreted by himself or his critics) became essential for the development of his own scientific work.

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³² Cf. f. i. in the appendix to the present study the textual comparison No. 4.

³³ The respective material will be included in a special volume with the title "Vygotsky's notebooks. A selection," prepared for publication by Zavershneva and van der Veer.

Appendix

A: Explicit references to L. Feuerbach and Feuerbachian keywords in the work of L.S. Vygotsky

Locus of Reference:

“Crisis in Psychology” [62, pp. 322, 324, 327]

“Mind, Consciousness, the Unconscious” [62, p. 116]

Locus of Reference:

“Concrete Human Psychology” [58, pp. 65 f.]

“Pedology of the Adolescent”, Part 3 [63, p. 172]

“Introduction to E.K. Gracheva’s Book” [61, pp. 218 f.]

Last Chapter of *Thinking and Speech* [60, p. 285]

Document “About systems” (1930)*

Notepad “The anomalous development of the child” (end of 1930, beginning of 1931)*

Document “Consciousness without words” (circa 1932)*

“The mind-body problem” (October 1932) in *Soviet Psychology*, 1983, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 15

Document “NB! In aphasia, schizophrenia, and other pathological alterations” (circa 1932–1933)*

Document “My remarks” (circa 1933)*

Unmistakably identifiable Sources:

“Against the Dualism of Body and Soul” [8, tom I, pp. 216, 214, 214 fn.; 12, Bd. 10, pp. 127, 125, 125 fn.]

“Against the Dualism of Body and Soul” [8, tom I, p. 216; 10, Bd. 10, p. 127]

Likely Sources:

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 50]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 50] – “Against the Dualism of Body and Soul” [8, tom I, p. 216; 10, Bd. 10, p. 127]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 12, p. 17; §§ 59, 60] – *The Essence of Christianity* [14, pp. 83, 124 fn.]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 12, p. 17, § 41, pp. 58 f.] – „Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy“ [15, pp. 63, 64, 66]

“Against the Dualism of Body and Soul” [8, tom I, pp. 213 f.; 10, Bd. 10, pp. 124 f.]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 12, p. 17; §§ 59, 60] *The Essence of Christianity* [14, pp. 83, 124 fn.]

The Essence of Christianity [14, pp. 2, 83 f.]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 12, p. 17]

“Principles of the Philosophy of the Future” [13, § 12, p. 17; §§ 59, 60] *The Essence of Christianity* [14, pp. 83, 124 fn.]

The Essence of Christianity [14, p. 2]

* Archival material (communicated to the present author by E. Iu. Zavershneva)

B: Decoding references to Feuerbach and to Feuerbachian keywords in notebooks and draft papers of Vygotsky (1930-1933)*

1.) Document “About systems” (1930)

“The crux of the matter is that logical analysis – the endpoint of every phenomenological introspective analysis that conceives the relationship between the phenomena of consciousness beyond the relationship to their causal-dynamic bases (this is why it is so difficult to separate logic from psychology in phenomenology) – does not establish the progress, the course, but the result of the process. In psychology the pigeons come already roasted to our mouth (Feuerbach). *This is the whole point.*” – This seems to be a reference to “Against the Dualism of Body and Soul, Flesh and Spirit”:

“From the psychological point of view, i. e., for me as the subject of imagination and thinking, imagination and thinking in itself [an sich] are no brain acts; for I can think without knowing that I have a brain; in psychology the pigeons fly roasted into our mouth; only the conclusions enter in our consciousness and feeling, but not the premises, only the results, but not the processes of the organism; therefore it is quite natural, that I tell apart thinking from the brain act and conceive it as something in itself. But from the fact, that for me thinking is no brain act but an act told apart and independent from the brain, does not follow that also *for itself* it is no brain act. No, on the contrary: What *for me* or *subjectively* is a purely mental [geistiger], immaterial, non-sensory act, is *in itself* or *objectively* a material, sensory [act]. The identity of subject and object, that we previously have described as the essence of psychology, especially applies to the brain and thinking act [Hirn- und Denkart]. The brain act is the highest act, laying the foundations or conditions for our self – an act, which therefore ultimately cannot be perceived as distinguished from ourselves” (quoted after [12, Vol. 10, pp. 124 f.]; transl. and insertions in brackets by P. K. – for the Russian version see [8, tom I, pp. 213 f.]).

2.) Indication to Feuerbach in the fragment “Concrete Human Psychology” (probably 1930): „*It is not thought that thinks: a person thinks.* This is the starting point [In margin] Feuerbach: Deborin – Hegel, XXVI” [59, pp. 65 f.]. = the same as in *Pedology of the Adolescent*, chapter 16 (which is a parallel-text to “Concrete Human Psychology”) [63, p. 172]. – See Textual comparison No. 4.

3.) Notepad “The anomalous development of the Child”

The notepad presumably dates from end 1930 – early 1931. It contains the plan for a talk that formed the basis of the article “The collective as a factor in the development of the anomalous (anomal’nogo) child.” The plan differs in several respect from the printed article, for example, in the article Vygotsky did not use the quote from Feuerbach as an epigraph:

“*The collective as a factor of development of the abnormal (nenormal’nogo) child.*”

Epigraph. What is absolutely impossible for one man alone, is possible for two.” – See for that the methodological-empirical part of the present study.

4.) Document “Consciousness without words” (1932).

“Outside consciousness a *change of systemic relationships* is unthinkable. We can find no analogue whatsoever of this phenomenon in organic life: because the mental organism itself changes (Stumpf). Further: there is *nothing similar*, no analogue whatever for this movement in consciousness without *meanings*, without senses, without Feuerbach’s second person (the word does this, it duplicates consciousness), i.e., the animal does not have it, it exists only in historical development.” – This seems to be a reference to two passages in the *Essence of Christianity*:

1. “Hence the brute has only a simple, man a twofold life: in the brute, the inner life is one with the outer; man has both an inner and an outer life. The inner life of man is the life which has relation to his species, to his general, as distinguished from his individual, nature. Man thinks – that is, he converses

* Pertinent passages from the notebooks and draft papers of Vygotsky provided by Ekaterina Iu. Zavershneva (nos. 1., 3., 4., 6., 7. – transl. by René van der Veer), additional passages (nos. 2. and 5.) and references to the Feuerbach-sources by P. K.

with himself. The brute can exercise no function which has relation to its species without another individual external to itself; but man can perform the functions of thought and speech, which strictly imply such a relation, apart from another individual. Man is himself at once I and thou; he can put himself in the place of another, for this reason, that to him his species, his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought” (quoted after [14, p. 2] – for the original German version see [12, Vol. 5, p. 29]).

2. “Wit, acumen, imagination, feeling as distinguished from sensation, reason as a subjective faculty, — all these so-called powers of the soul are powers of humanity, not of man as an individual; they are products of culture, products of human society. Only where man has contact and friction with his fellow-man are wit and sagacity kindled; hence there is more wit in the town than in the country, more in great towns than in small ones. Only where man suns and warms himself in the proximity of man arise feeling and imagination. Love, which requires mutuality, is the spring of poetry; and only where man communicates with man, only in speech, a social act, awakes reason. To ask a question and to answer are the first acts of thought. Thought originally demands two. It is not until man has reached an advanced stage of culture that he can double himself, so as to play the part of another within himself. To think and to speak are therefore, with all ancient and sensuous nations, identical; they think only in speaking; their thought is only conversation” (quoted after [14, p. 83] – for the original German version see [12, Vol. 5, pp. 166 f.]).

5.) “*The mind-body problem*” (October 1932), *Soviet Psychology*, Vol. 21 (1983), No. 3, p. 15. Here, Feuerbach is not mentioned personally, but the keyword “impossible for one, but possible for two” is used.

6.) Document “*NB! In aphasia, schizophrenia, and other pathological alterations*” (circa 1932–1933) “Our differences of opinion about the question of localization: for us central in localization are the extracerebral connections – cf. Jackson: in understanding, another person stimulates the connections in my brain – I am his victim; in understanding oneself, one part of the brain communicates with another part via the periphery. Mediation creates fundamentally new types of connections in the nervous system. What is impossible for one person, is possible for two.” – See for that the methodological-empirical part of the present study.

7.) Document “*My remarks*” (circa 1933):

“The concept – inner speech.” Added with pencil: “The action of mind according to Spinoza, and not the *passiones*. Activity inside oneself, the animal is active in the open. And activity of a *new type*. Its source are 2 persons – Feuerbach. *New brain structures*.” – This seems to be once more an allusion to the above quoted passages from the *Essence of Christianity* [14, pp. 2, 83].

C: Textual Comparison No. 1

Vygotsky: Introduction to E.K. Gracheva's book

“Only social education can lead severely retarded children through the process of becoming human by eliminating the solitude of idiocy and severe retardation. L. Feuerbach's wonderful phrase, might be taken as the motto to the study of development in abnormal children: ‘That which is impossible for one, is possible for two.’ Let us add: That which is impossible on the level of individual development becomes possible on the level of social development” [61, pp. 218 f.].

Vygotsky: Last chapter of *Thinking and Speech*

“In consciousness, the word is what – in Feuerbach's words – is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two. The word is the most direct manifestation of the historical nature of human consciousness” [60, p. 285].

Feuerbach: “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future”, § 12

“What is absolutely impossible for one person alone is possible for two” (cf. [13, p. 17]).

D: Textual Comparison No. 2

Vygotsky:

“The developmental path for a severely retarded child lies through collaborative activity, the social help of another human being, who from the first is his mind, his will, his activities. This proposition also corresponds entirely with the normal path of development for a child. *The developmental path for a severely retarded child lies through relationships and collaborative activity, with other humans.* For precisely this reason, the social education of severely retarded children reveals to us possibilities which might seem outright Utopian from the viewpoint of purely biologically based physiological education ...” [61, p. 218].

“The term *idiot* ... literally means *solitarius*, a lone man: He is really alone with his sensations, without any intellectual or moral will. (...) Contemporary scientific research is wholeheartedly proving ... that the source of idiocy is solitude. (...) In this respect, as we have already said, it is the social education of severely retarded children which becomes the sole sustainable and scientific path toward their education. In addition, it alone is capable of recreating the absent functions where they are not, because of a biological sense of inadequacy in the child. Only social education can lead severely retarded children through the process of becoming human by eliminating the solitude of idiocy and severe retardation” [61, p. 218].

Feuerbach:

“Thus man is the God of man. That he is, he has to thank Nature; that he is man, he has to thank man; spiritually as well as physically he can achieve nothing without his fellow-man. Four hands can do more than two, but also four eyes can see more than two. And this combined power is distinguished not only in quantity but also in quality from that which is solitary. In isolation human power is limited, in combination it is infinite” [14, p. 83]

“The single man for himself does not possess the essence of man, neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community, in the unity of man with man ...(...) Solitude is finiteness and limitation; community is freedom and infinity” (cf. [13, p. 71]. “Community enhances the force of emotion, heightens confidence. What we are unable to do alone we are able to do with others. The sense of solitude is the sense of limitation, the sense of community is the sense of freedom” [14, p. 124, fn.*].

E: Textual Comparison No. 3

Vygotsky:

“In consciousness, the word is what – in Feuerbach’s words – is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two” [60, p. 285].

Feuerbach:

“Not alone, but only with others, does one reach notions and reason in general. Two human beings are needed for the generation of man – of the spiritual as well as of the physical man; the community of man with man is the first principle and criterion of truth and generality” [13, pp. 58 f.].

“Language is nothing else than the *realization of the species*, the mediation of the ‘I’ with the ‘Thou’ in order to manifest, by eliminating their individual separateness, the unity of the species” ([15, p. 63] – rectified after the original (German) version by P. K.).

Verbal representation of a thought is therefore “not a mediation of the thought within the thought and for the thought itself, but a mediation through language between thinking, *in so far as it is mine*, and the thinking of another *person, in so far as it is his*, ... a mediation through which I prove that *my* thought is not mine but thought *in and for itself* so that it can just as well be that of the other person as it can be mine” (cf. [15, p. 64] – rectified after the original (German) version by P.K.).

F: Textual Comparison No. 4

Vygotsky:

“*It is not thought that thinks: a person thinks.* This is the starting point [In margin] Feuerbach: Deborin – Hegel, XXVI. What is man? For Hegel, he is a logical subject. For Pavlov, it is a soma, an organism. For us, man is a social person = *an aggregate of social relations, embodied in an individual* (psychological functions built according to social structure). [In margin] Man is always consciousness or self-consciousness for Hegel XXXVII” [59, pp. 65 f.].

“But, in the well-known expression of L. Feuerbach, it is not thinking that thinks – man thinks” [63, p. 172].

Feuerbach:

“The new philosophy has, therefore, as its principle of cognition and as its subject, not the ego, the absolute, abstract mind, in short, not reason for itself alone, but the real and whole being of man. Reality, the subject of reason, is only man. *Man thinks, not the ego, not reason.* (...) Only a real being recognizes real objects; only where thought is not the subject of itself but a predicate of a real being is the idea not separated from being. (...) Only when thought is separated from man and is determined for itself alone do awkward, fruitless, and, from this viewpoint, insoluble questions arise. How does thought arrive at being, that is, the object? For thought determined for itself alone, that is, posited apart from man, is apart from all ties and connections to the world” [13, pp. 66, 67, 67 f.]; italics by P. K.

G: Textual Comparison No. 5

Vygotsky: “Infancy”

“Because of all this, there is such a singular, unique dependence of the child on the adults that it sustains and permeates ... what would seem to be the most individual biological needs and wants of the infant. The dependence of the infant on adults creates a completely unique character of the child’s relations to reality (and to himself): these relations are always mediated by others, and are always refracted through a prism of relations with another person. (...) Every relation of the child to the outside world, even the simplest, is always a relation refracted through the relation to another person. The whole life of the infant is organized in such a way that in every situation, visibly or not, there is another person. This can be expressed in another way by saying that every relation of the child to things is a relation accomplished with the help of or through another person” [63, p. 216].

“The adult is the center of every situation during infancy. It is natural for this reason that the simple closeness or distancing of a person signifies for the child a sharp and radical change in the situation in which he finds himself. [figuratively speaking] we might say that a simple approach and distancing of an adult arms and disarms the activity of the child. In the absence of the adult, the infant falls into a situation of helplessness. His activity with respect to the external world is seemingly paralyzed or at least limited and narrowed to a high degree. (...) This is why another person is always the psychological center of every situation for the infant. This is why, for the infant, the sense of every situation is determined in the first place by this center, that is, its social content, or, to put it more broadly, the relation of the child to the world depends on and is largely derived from his most direct and concrete relations with an adult” (loc. cit., p. 231; textual change in the brackets by P. K.).

Feuerbach: *The Essence of Christianity*

“My fellow-man is the bond between me and the world. I am, and I feel myself, dependent on the world, because I first feel myself dependent on other men. If I did not need man, I should not need the world. (...) Without other men, the world would be for me not only dead and empty, but meaningless. Only through his fellow does man become clear to himself and self-conscious ... A man existing absolutely alone would lose himself without any sense of his individuality in the ocean of Nature; he would neither comprehend himself as man nor Nature as Nature. The first object of man is man. The sense of Nature, which opens to us the consciousness of the world as a world, is a later product; for it first arises through the distinction of man from himself. (...) The *ego*, then, attains to consciousness of the world through consciousness of the *thou*. Thus man is the God of man” [14, pp. 82 f.].

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