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L.I. Bozhovich and the Psychology of Personality

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Guest Editor's Introduction

This issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* focuses on the work of a remarkable follower of L.S. Vygotsky, L.I. Bozhovich (1908–1981), who was born in Kursk. Her work concentrated on areas such as issues and problems of education in child psychology, the development and social formation of personality, mechanisms of motivation, and the role of human will in the regulation of behavior. Her most recognized book is *Personality and Its Formation in Childhood*, published in 1968.¹

Bozhovich focused on a distribution of Vygotsky's ideas related to higher mental functions and their influence on the affective sphere of personality as a whole. Her concept of personality was more concrete than Vygotsky's, and she felt that personality for Vygotsky was an analogue to other terms such as "higher synthesis," or "cultural development." For Bozhovich, the study of personality is an inward understanding of a free person, although this is inseparable from culture. She attributed an important role to human will and to the capacity of self-organization of personality, including the cultural characteristics related to the subjective side of an individual.

Four of Vygotsky's basic concepts were constantly incorporated in her work, including the social situation of development, experiencing or living through a certain experience (*perezhivanie*), the relationship of emotions/affect and needs, and the mediational char-

acter of signs in the definition and development of higher psychological functions. Regarding *perezhivanie*, Bozhovich states:

Vygotsky understood *perezhivanie* as the integration of cognitive and affective elements, which always presupposes the presence of emotions. Vygotsky used this concept in order to emphasize the wholeness of the psychological development of children, integrating external and internal elements at each stage of development. . . . According to Bozhovich, for a short period of time Vygotsky considered *perezhivanie* as the "unity" of psychological development in the study of the social situation of development. (Gonzalez-Rey 2002, p. 136)

The second concept of importance is that of internal positioning, which can be understood as a "third level" or "third space." Bozhovich stated:

in comparing individuals, it is not the primary or even the secondary relationships within the integral system of consciousness that are important, but rather the relationships that exist on some third level and the way the individual himself makes use of his own capacities, that is, the place they occupy in his personality and activity. (1977, p. 14)

Bozhovich spent her last years studying the problem of human will, and her last book on this subject was left unfinished. Bozhovich's understanding of the will of free action was not merely abstract, it was an idea she practiced. For example, she was a heavy smoker, as was her husband, an accomplished violin player. After the doctors told her husband that he must stop smoking because of poor health, Bozhovich put her package of cigarettes down on a table and never smoked again.

A nonconformist by nature, Bozhovich's conception of human free will and personality was guided by different sources, such as psychology, philosophy, and culture. In her laboratory there were many heated debates, and she differed with A.N. Leontiev on various issues, although their arguments were constructive. Viewing the development of higher mental functions and their influence on the affective sphere within the human personality as a whole, Bozhovich concluded that the development of this sphere is guided by the same laws as the development of cognitive processes.

During her lifetime, two of Bozhovich's closest collaborators were M.S. Landa-Neimark and V.E. Chudnovskii. Landa-Neimark focuses on different dominant trends in the organization of personality, including the collective, individual, and praxiological. Chudnovskii concentrates on the moral stability of personality. L.V. Slavina should also be mentioned because both Bozhovich and Slavina worked together during their entire professional lives. When the young Bozhovich came to Moscow to study psychology and A.V. Zaporozhets arrived from Kharkov, they both lived with Slavina in her Moscow apartment for some time. While Bozhovich was a strong theorist and researcher, Slavina was a brilliant experimenter. In fact, almost all of Bozhovich's experiments were carried out by Slavina. Another student and follower of Bozhovich is Fernando Gonzalez-Rey, from Cuba now residing in Brazil, who works on the aspects of personal subjectivity.

In recreating a picture of L.I. Bozhovich today, one point stands out in particular: she was a very strong-willed personality, one who acted in an independent fashion even under Soviet ideological constraints. Her colleagues have stated that she was cheerful and very humorous, and that she maintained an exceptionally strong interest in her research investigations. Working until the very last moments of her life, Bozhovich's final, unfinished article was devoted to Vygotsky. When approaching her last days, she spent them in observing and researching her own behavior (disintegration, as she described it), and developing strategies to cope with her situation. Clearly, her life's work was not a simple projection of Vygotsky's views. While it was always rooted in Vygotsky's method, Bozhovich's work was original and deeply scientific.

It is hoped that this issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* will offer a broader understanding of the theories of L.I. Bozhovich, and will inspire readers' interest in knowing more about her life and her research. This issue is dedicated to her memory and work. It is also dedicated to the memory of L.S. Vygotsky, who died seventy years ago on June 11, 1934. Special thanks go to N. Tolystykh, M. Landa-Neimark, A. Prikhozhan, F. Gonzalez-Rey, T. Akhutina, A. Leontiev, N. Gareev, and C. Golota.

Note

1. L.I. Bozhovich, *Lichnosti i ee formirovanie v detstvom vozraste* [Personality and Its Formation in Childhood] (Moscow, 1968). Because it had a pink cover and was Bozhovich's best-known book, it was called the "pink Bozhovich."

References

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- Gonzalez-Rey, F. 2002. "L.S. Vygotsky and the Question of Personality in the Cultural-Historical Approach." In *Voices Within Vygotsky's Non-Classical Psychology: Past, Present, Future*, ed. D. Robbins and A. Stetsenko. New York: Nova Science.