

Psychological views of P. P. Blonsky

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Abstract. The article presents the results of a study of the psychological views of P. P. Blonsky. An understanding of the psyche based on the dialectical-materialistic principle is revealed. The psyche is defined as the property of highly organized matter, the function of the nervous system, the product of the brain. It was established that the leading topic of the scientist's research was the study of the characteristics of human behavior and its explanation with an indication of influencing factors. The judgment is grounded that the behavior of each individual person and any psychological phenomenon, according to P. Blonsky, should be studied in development, relying on comparative genetic and historical principles. Mental processes should be considered taking into account the peculiarities of their development in phylogenesis and ontogenesis. The leading processes in the development of higher manifestations of mental are memory, imagination, thinking, emotions and speech, which are improved in the process of active cognition and various types of activities. Recommendations regarding the harmonic development of a person are indicated the predominance of intellectual activity over emotional and the development of purposive behavior. The provision on the influence of society on the process of formation and development of the individual is defended.

Keywords: behavior, memory, thinking, speech, comparative genetic and historical principle.

Introduction. In the history of domestic psychology, the activities of P. P. Blonsky (1884–1941) were of great importance. With him, we had an original scientist who gave himself to science entirely. P. P. Blonsky was bold in his statements, creatively approached the solution of problems and various kinds of research. The range of problems that he developed is very wide. His research interests were at the intersection of philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. He contributed a lot of valuable and original to psychology, opening up wide prospects for future researchers.

The psychological ideas of P. P. Blonsky are not sufficiently represented yet. In historical and psychological literature, in essence, there is no work where they are comprehensively analyzed. This includes general psychological issues, memory, thinking and speech, issues of learning and development of thought processes.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the key ideas of P. P. Blonsky and their significance for the formation and further development of psychological science.

Materials and methods. The research material was the scientific works of P. P. Blonsky. In the course of the study, the following methods were used: biographical, systemic-structural, comparative-historical, scientific interpretation.

Results and discussion. Pavel Petrovich Blonsky was born on June 27, 1884 in Kyiv in the family of a petty official. His childhood and youth years passed here. P. Blonsky was educated at the Second Kyiv Classical Gymnasium and the Kyiv University of St. Volodymyr. Having become a student in 1902, P. Blonsky began to study psychology with great interest. During his years of study, he was interested especially in questions of the character and behavior of people. He did not ignore historical and philosophical topics, problems of ethics. After graduating from the University of St. Volodymyr P.P. Blonsky is engaged in scientific and teaching activities. After passing his master's exams in 1913, he became a privat-docent at Moscow University. At the same time, he travels around the country and gives lectures at summer teacher courses.

Since 1914, P.P. Blonsky begins to be published. He

publishes pedagogical works: «The Place of K. D. Ushinsky in the History of Russian Pedagogy» (1914), «Pedagogy of Progress and Humanity» (1914), «Jan Amos Komensky» (1915), «Course of Pedagogy» (1916), «Tasks and Methods of the People's School» (1916), «School and Social System» (1917), «Why all workers should be socialists» (1917) and others.

Since the fall of 1919, P.P. Blonsky has been a professor at Moscow University and other higher educational institutions, becoming the first leader and one of the organizers of the Academy of Social Education. The Academy aimed to prepare people who are politically active, who know how to organize their activities in various fields independently. P. Blonsky's huge practical pedagogical and organizational activities were combined with classes related to the development of the most complex theoretical problems of pedagogy and psychology. The research work carried out by scientist at the Institute of Scientific Pedagogy, the Institute of Nationalities, the Institute of Polytechnic Education was colossal in volume and its significance. In the period from 1918 to 1930, P. Blonsky wrote more than a hundred works, among them the «Labor School» in two parts (1919), «Reform of Science» (1920), «Essay on Scientific Psychology» (1921), textbooks for schools and higher educational institutions, a large number of articles on psychology and pedagogy, curricula for schools.

In the last ten years of his life, P. P. Blonsky worked at the Institute of Psychology. Here he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Education in 1935 for the totality of publishing activities. At the Institute of Psychology, P. Blonsky led the laboratory of thinking, participating in the training of graduate students. For many years of pedagogical activity, he brought up a large number of teachers and researchers in psychology and pedagogy. He was attentive to young specialists, supported and encouraged their creativity.

Questions of general psychology. P. Blonsky's understanding of the psyche was based on the dialectical-materialistic principle, as a property of highly organized matter, the function of the nervous system, the product of the brain, and the formation of personality was a socially

determined process. In turn, society, the scientist noted, is constantly developing and human behavior is a function of the behavior of the society surrounding him. Human behavior is measured with time. A change in human behavior becomes especially noticeable when large intervals of time of several decades are taken [3]. That is why, P. Blonsky pointed out, when studying human behavior, one should not limit oneself to the psychology of an adult. «We must investigate human behavior, P. Blonsky writes, throughout a person's life, and it is the behavior of a child, as the earliest behavior, that should serve as a starting point for us in the study of an adult: it is the psychology of childhood that explains a lot in adult psychology» [4, p. 43]. Therefore, according to the scientist, the behavior of each individual person and any psychological phenomenon should be studied in development, genetically, historically. «Thus, scientific psychology is primarily genetic psychology» [1, p. 30]. The genetic or historical principle on which P. Blonsky conducted his research became leading for many psychologists in the following years.

P. P. Blonsky paid great attention to the development of social psychology. He argued, «In fact, the process of life is social» [1, p. 30]. The behavior of a person can only be social in its foundations. The scientist expressed the idea of studying the behavior of people depending on their class position and class interests. In the aspect of social psychology, he sought to analyze the behavior of different classes in modern society, as well as the manifestation of science, art, morality, showing their influence on human behavior.

The scientist attached great importance to specific methods of scientific psychological research and emphasized the importance of observation and experiment, the mathematical processing of their data and the mathematical formulation of conclusions, and assigned self-observation and questioning only an auxiliary role. According to him, any study of any facts should proceed from monitoring them. To observe human behavior, P. Blonsky states, means to systematically, conscientiously and carefully monitor the actions of the observed subject and those features of the environment and the processes taking place within the subject that determine these actions. P. Blonsky paid serious attention to drawing up a preliminary plan. At the same time, he paid the main attention to the experiment, in which, according to him, the situation is simplified and the conditions of the observed phenomenon are changed for scientific purposes. P. Blonsky also applied a comparative genetic method to the study of human behavior. He believed that the full explanation of human behavior could be in the case when it would be compared with the behavior of an animal, an adult – with a child. «It is clear that only a comparative study of the genesis and evolution of the analyzed phenomenon will give us a certain objective picture of the phenomenon and its dependencies. That is why the so-called general psychology should be the result of those generalizations that result in comparisons of the psychology of an adult, a child, animals, primitive peoples and an abnormal person. All these separate branches of psychology, in addition to their own significance, serve as necessary sources for general psychology, which studies the general picture of human behavior in connection with general changes in it» [4, p. 60].

Noting the close connection of human activity with the structure of his body, P. Blonsky pointed out the need for psychology to use the rich material provided by the comparative anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, as well as the comparative history of peoples. At the same time, he noticed the danger of excessive absolutism regarding this connection.

P. P. Blonsky paid much attention to the consideration of various types of sensitivity that contribute to the process of adaptation of organisms to specific environmental conditions. He attributed to them organic feelings, superficial feelings and deep feelings, peripheral and deep feelings, feelings of pressure, synesthesia [2]. Along with these types of feelings, he considered those that was included in the category of emotions. They, according to P. Blonsky, express the general reaction of the body and are accompanied mainly by experiences of pleasure and displeasure. Linking emotions with expressive movements, the scientist emphasized deep changes in the chemistry of nervous matter, occurring depending on the nature of emotions. For a completely waking life, the scientist noted, the predominance of intellectual activity over emotional activity, the development of targeted behavior and the improvement of intelligence in the process of work is characteristic.

Problems of memory and thinking. P. Blonsky considered the traces of impressions not as a frozen photographic picture, but as a dynamic phenomenon. He considered the association as a universal memory mechanism for both animals and humans. At the same time, speaking of human memory, the scientist emphasized the special importance of those conditional reflexes that are associated with speech in it. The problem of memory for scientist boils down to the problem of obtaining visual images. At the same time, the problem of image memory according to Blonsky boils down to the history of the image: 1) image-copy, 2) sequential image, 3) visual image and image-representation, as well as the question of what incentives mainly cause images. Speech memory problems boil down to the problem of hidden speech skills. This follows the position of the mechanistic concept of memory, which has developed in behavioral psychology. This concept was adhered to by Blonsky, but at the same time trying to introduce an element of development (the history of the image) here.

Memory, in P. Blonsky's understanding, is a property of the brain, which consists in remembering, preserving and forgetting what was in a person's individual experience. Memory function is associated with other mental functions. The initial impetus for remembering can be movements, feelings, images and thinking. They correspond to certain types of memory: motor, or memory-habit. Affective memory, image memory and logical memory. P. Blonsky considers these types of memory from the point of view of development as four consecutive stages of memory. Historically, they arose in phylogenetic development. However, in ontogenesis, P. Blonsky pointed out that motor memory appears first, then affective, somewhat later image and much later – logical memory. At the same time, based on ontogenetic and phylogenetic data, the scientist establishes that the main types of memory are, as it were, members of the same sequential series. In both phylogenesis and ontogenesis,

they develop in a specific sequence after each other. The closer to the beginning of this series, the less consciousness takes place, and even vice versa, its activity interferes with memory. «Even a very experienced dancer can go astray thinking how to move his feet» [4, p. 313].

Image and logical memory, according to P. Blonsky, are in the sphere of consciousness. But their position in relation to consciousness is different. There is more consciousness in the logical memory than in the image. Hence, the scientist concludes: there is reason to believe that different types of memory, developing sequentially one after another, are at different levels of consciousness, belong to different stages of the development of consciousness. «It strengthens us once again, P. Blonsky writes, under the assumption that types of memory are nothing more than different levels of memory, or more precisely and correctly, various stages of memory development» []. Thus, P. Blonsky distinguishes between the following stages of memory: 1) motor, 2) affective, 3) image and 4) verbal. Also he calls these stages memory levels, identifying them with types of memory.

Through experimental research, P. Blonsky concludes that strong emotional impressions, moreover unpleasant, are stored in memory for the longest time. At the same time, caution is based on impressions of suffering. In long-term stability, P. Blonsky saw the biological and social meaning of affective memory. As for the image memory, the scientist traced it mainly on visual images. He conducted a study of image memory on the course of visual images, their disappearance and restoration, both in waking conditions and in a state of nap. In his opinion, image memory is a primitive kind of memory. Most often, visual images occur in a person when he is asleep or close to it. It is more difficult for visual images to arise with complete wakefulness. An essential condition for their appearance is the absence of muscle tension, passivity of the subject. The brightness of visual images is depending on the emotions associated with them. Most people tend to transition visual images into memory-story. This process reveals the transformation and reintegration of images. Reintegration, according to P. Blonsky, is the restoration of the image of a holistic object in the presence of its separate part, and transformation is imagination. Imagination in the understanding of P. Blonsky means the operation of images, the production of new images, combinatorial ability and creativity. His imagination is in two forms: 1) reproduction and 2) construction. There are dialectical transitions between both types of imagination.

P. P. Blonsky noted the closest connection between memory work and thinking. The effect of thinking on memory is manifested in memorizing and remembering: memorizing becomes thinking memorizing, and remembering becomes thinking remembering. Research conducted by a scientist on children of different ages has shown that at different age periods the relationship between memory and thinking is different. The processes of recollection and remembering are not identical to each other, since recollection is a passive and automatic act, and remembering is an active strong-willed act; remembering in its content practically does not depend on feelings, and remembering is often affective in its content.

Considering the remembering as an active strong-willed act, P. Blonsky emphasized the presence of the following structure in it: determination, effort, deliberation (discussion), choice, sanction.

According to P. Blonsky, thinking arises in the course of human interaction with the environment. Thoughts were considered by him as very subtle, specialized reactions of the large hemispheres, which disrupt the balance of his life. Representing a wonderful tool in the struggle for life, thinking, the scientist claims, is closely related to human interests. He pointed out that thinking reflects the objects and phenomena of reality in their essential connections and relationships, but does not "construct" this reality. P. Blonsky insisted that thinking is related to the sensual cognition of man. He considered any evidence of the existence of «pure» thinking untenable. At the same time, P. Blonsky criticized the tendency to reduce thinking to its sensual forms. Sensual cognition acts as a source and support for thinking. Thanks to thinking, he argued, sensual cognition, rising to the highest level, becomes meaningful. In this regard, thinking should be considered as such a process that is depending on a person's past experience. The knowledge of the new is based on the fixed results of the knowledge of what was in the past experience. At the same time, thinking is in close connection not only with memory, but also with imagination, speech and the emotional side of a person's mental activity. Scientists recognize the knowledge of new connections and relationships of things that are not directly given in perception as a distinctive feature of thinking. Playing a large role in cognitive activity, the actualization of previously formed connections in itself cannot yet be called a thought process. The scientist insisted on the inextricable connection of thinking with speech. Thinking and speech, according to P. Blonsky, have the same root genetically – action, practical activity and work. Speech and thinking evolved through labor. The initial intellectual operations were actions, he argued, and only gradually the actual action was replaced by mental analysis. Speech and thinking, internal and external speech developed simultaneously; they are social products. The activity of thinking begins with the formation of concepts and goes through three stages: 1) minimal differentiation, 2) establishment of identity and 3) operation of opposites and contradictions. P. Blonsky indicates knowledge of the conditions and developments of the thinking process.

Conclusions from the study. Thus, the psychological ideas of P. P. Blonsky reflected the current requirements of the new structure of society and the state as a whole. An experiment in psychological research and mathematical processing of the results obtained become leading tools in the knowledge of mental phenomena. P. Blonsky emphasizes the leading role of social in the formation of personality and higher mental functions. The idea of mutual influence of mental processes on their formation and development is defended. Also, knowledge of mental phenomena should be based on the genetic principle and the principle of historicism. The development of the mental becomes possible thanks to various kinds of human activities.

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