

## Communication as an Anthropological Concept

P. S. GUREVICH  
M. A. SULTANOVA

*Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Federation Academy of Sciences  
Moscow, Russia*

Both philosophers and psychologists realize the importance of an in-depth knowledge of oneself for man's self-identification. It is that core that serves to sustain him. Man is constantly asking himself a question – who am I? – and is forever correcting the image formed in his consciousness. Obviously, reality introduces meaningful adjustments in the process of self-cognition. Thus, youngsters often strive to “try on” adult roles, while elders refuse to accept their age. As the poet said, “Ridiculous is indeed a frivolous old man.” Not at once a man realizes his age. Societal values are also often changing.

A person of patriarchal culture finds it easier to adapt to the existing order of things. Tradition, as it were, not only cements the inner image but also is a means of realization of life conceptions. However, a whirlpool of images is a norm of social life. So one has to adapt to his new age, to his new occupation and to changes of social roles.

The human psyche's potential is not limitless. When habitual relations and ties crumble, it is hard to be one's usual self. Hence, a task of the psychotherapist is to help a patient form a more or less stable image of himself, especially against the background of mass-scale neurosis. The problem is how to go about it. Take an infarction case. What kind of a self-image should be formed? The former one that helped him to survive or a new one, that fits into the new circumstances? Adjustments can be spontaneous and induced.

Gerontologists probing the secrets of longevity argue that mental stability is conducive to psychic health. For example, in Georgia, it is predicted a part of on national tradition. Old age is not regarded as ridiculous, eccentric or despicable: “My years are my wealth,” a poet says. A respectful attitude to old age is a hallmark of Georgian nation tradition, enabling long livers to keep the peace of mind, well-being of soul and to come to terms with changing times.

Personification is the process of conceptualization of the Self during socialization, a search for a role model and an object of worship.

This striving for identification is a deep-seated human desire. By himself, an individual is unable to fathom the purpose and meaning of the world of strange things and phenomena surrounding him. He needs certain guidelines to identify himself with an acknowledged model.

Such techniques were first examined in Freud's psychoanalytical theory and later extrapolated onto "normal" spiritual-cultural life. Freud interpreted identification as an attempt by a child (or a weak-willed person) to adopt the strength of the father and mother (or a leader) and thus lessen the fear of reality.

Present day researches have expanded our notion of this mechanism. The world of human emotions is extremely complicated. Emotional states such as love, affection, compassion, empathy and responsibility imply observations of both oneself and others, for they are, by definition, directed at another object. Consequently, the need to see some personified models is inherent in man.

Communication is an interaction of people conditioned by the mode of communal life and activity. The process of cultural development gives rise to a variety of means for human interaction. People engaged in communication exchange information. Intellectual information is encoded in signs, abstract symbols and equations. Communication is an exchange of information among people, involving the individual's intellectual, emotional and volitional qualities.

Who am I? Paradoxically, I cannot say anything without correlating myself with others. This explains why "the involved thinking" predominates in all ethical-philosophical doctrines. Thus Schopenhauer believed our personality to be a *sine qua non* for happiness. Man's life guidelines grow out of his subjective world of desires and passions, which he seeks to realize. This spontaneity distinguishes a given individual from the standard world of other people.

"While entering a society," writes Schopenhauer, "we have to reject  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our Ego in order to be like others." (Schopenhauer 1989). An individual can be in perfect harmony only with his own self, neither with a friend, nor with the beloved. The German philosopher views subjectivity through alienation from the "others."

Mikhail Bakhtin seems to have taken the issue directly with Schopenhauer. What will happen to an individual that deliberately isolates himself, he asks. Will he be able to achieve absolute solitude? Or will this process ultimately result in a dialogue?

Bakhtin writes: "An individual can never find fullness inside himself," i.e. one man depends on the next social-wise. (Bakhtin 1979). But there is more in this phrase that meets the eye. Human life is fragile, whimsical and is easily deformed. To keep one's inner world

intact, it takes a message from another equal consciousness in order to enter the world of another human universe and discover a different view of the world, of myself and of another person.

In contrast to Schopenhauer's assertions, Bakhtin goes on:

Man can never stay alone. He focuses on himself, projecting inside the power of his consciousness leading to self-awareness, the herald of a dialogue. Man's loneliness depresses him, consequently, it is not self-sufficient. We can only comprehend a person's inner wealth by bringing his communication potential to light.

People communicate with one another, each individual carrying his own image. Does it correspond to the inner nature of this individual? Why is this image not similar to its prototype? What is the process of alienation of the essence from what we see on the screen like? Why is it that one individual on the screen arouses mass agitation while another does not? To illustrate: in 1943, the American radio invited a famous American actress, Cat Smith, who urged the listeners to buy war bonds -- with great success. Millions of women identified themselves with the image formed by Cat Smith which corresponded to their specific inner world.

They saw the well-heeled actress (without a family) as a thrifty mother worried about her children's future. Does it mean the program's creators try to intentionally mystify audience? Not at all. It was a spontaneous process, the result of a collective delusion. The explanation should be sought in the situation developing in the U.S.A. before the war crisis, when millions of disconcerted people were looking at the home and family for salvation.

An individual perceives the world as a stream of personalized models; he correlates himself with other individuals and their traits, appearance and character. A personality is molded when one identifies oneself with a specific image, character, or a real or fictitious idol.

Psychologists underline that a person's behavior is largely conditioned by his assessment of himself and his social roles. Thus, middle social strata tend to rank themselves with more affluent people and think and act accordingly. In other words, a person's behavior is regulated not only by his inherent social roles, but also by his own assessments. This means we won't find, in the behavior of a lowly concierge, signs of the lifestyle inherent in the people of her occupation if she identifies herself with someone having unusual motivations and other value orientations.

In the process of socialization, an individual correlates himself both with specific social roles and personified notions, consonant with his personal guidelines, such as literary heroes, real historical personalities

or conventional socio-psychological or cultural/historical characters (a romanticist, a strong personality etc.). These imagination-induced role models are of utmost importance to an individual (person).

Modern-day culture is ill-suited for openness. Even in the family, you won't always find sympathy and interest. According to the Russian psychologist Vladimir Levy, people waiting at a crossroads are mostly engaged in an inner monologue. They are gesticulating, trying to express their state of mind and unburden themselves.

People analyze their emotional experiences. There are techniques in every culture that cater to human needs. For example, confession plays a great psychotherapeutic role in religious culture. A child tells about the sin he has committed, even if it is a stolen candy. What is important is not the misdeed, but the need to exteriorize emotional states.

Philosophical and psychological literature is replete with confessional works. One example is "Confessions" by St. Augustine (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cc A.D.), one of the Fathers of the Christian Church. Such works always appear at crucial times historically, culturally or existentially, but they tell about things personal and inmost. "It is an exhaustive revelation of a rebellious soul – all alone and together with others: past, present and future friends, enemies and near ones," writes Vadim Rabinovich, a Russian scholar.

How do people identify themselves? Man is a vulnerable loner with a powerful spirit. He knows that as a result of penitential confessions he emerges a different person who has fathomed the depth of his own nature. St. Augustine wrote,

Haven't I passed from infancy to childhood? Or, rather it came to me and took the place of infancy. Infancy did not disappear – and yet it was no more. No longer was I a baby that could not articulate words, I was a boy who says 'I was'. Later I understood how I learned to speak. My elders did not teach me in a systematic manner. I acted according to my wits which You gave me, my Lord.

Confessions and repentance in the name of a holistic man – this is the idea of Pierre Abelard's (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> cc) *Historia Calamitatum* (*The Story of My Disasters*). It begins as follows:

As often as not, human emotions are activated or de-activated through examples rather than words. That is why I've decided to send you a reassuring epistle with the exposition of my disasters in the hope that in comparison with mine your own misfortunes may seem meaningless or unimportant and you will take it in your stride.

Abelard proceeds to tell about his passion for Eloise, adding that they had not missed any joy and delight conceivable in love. As is well known, Abelard was castrated. "Oh, how just was the Lord punishing me in that part of my body with which I sinned!" And further: "I used the wallow in fame. A blind chance has put an end to it." *The Story of My Disasters* is a confession of a suffering body and suffering soul.

Ferdinand, in Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Wisdom of an Odd Fellow*, opens a manuscript of Jean Jacques Rousseau and sees that the title "Reminiscences" was changed for "Confessions". He reads:

I am taking up work without a precedent in the past or future. I want to show man in his true light. I want to show myself.

Only myself. I well know my heart and I know people. I am not like any of those I've met. I may not be better than others but I am different.

In the Day of Judgment I will appear before the Almighty holding this book and say: I have not concealed my vices, nor embellished my virtues. I have presented myself as I am – at times despicable and mean, at times kind-hearted, noble and magnanimous. Let multitudes of my contemporaries hear my confessions, sigh for my vices and blush for my mishaps. And I dare them to say at the footsteps of Your throne, O Almighty, "I was better than this man!"

The naked truthfulness of Rousseau's lines deeply shook Ferdinand. He never even imagined that he could meet a man so brave as to dig so deep into his Self. The bosom of his soul was so fearlessly turned upside down, with still more bravery than all the bowels of the earth ever were.

Ferdinand read about the first physical punishment of the eight-year-old boy Jean-Jacque. How this punishment carried out by the hand of a beautiful woman, arose in this mollycoddled boy something like voluptuousness of the prematurely awakening sexuality and how this deep feeling defined forever the trend of his desires, passions, the character of his sensitivity.

Ferdinand also read about Jean-Jacque, who at his 9 years, for the first time in his life, faced terrible injustice. How he was harassed for a sin he insisted that he had not committed, but his surroundings thought that he was "obstinate," and though he was tormented he did not plead guilty and came out as a winner. Ferdinand read,

Imagine a boy, who was shy and obedient, used to intelligent and delicate treatment, and suddenly those, whom he loved and respected more than anything in the world demonstrated cruelty and injustice towards him. What a collapse of all his notions took place, what a break of his soul,

what an upheaval of his thoughts! Physical pain was strong, but it did not cause me much torment: I was choked with anger, despondency, rage. When at last I went to my bed and set to my poor back, I gave way to my anger, crying hundred times at the top of my voice: "Carnifex! Carnifex! Carnifex!" ("Executioner!") Even to-day, when I write these lines, my pulse begins to beat quickly. And if I lived hundred thousand years, those minutes would never grow dim in my memory anyway. This first clash with violence and injustice was so deeply imprinted in my heart, that it break out every time, when I see injustice or hear about it – it is indifferent towards whom they are addressed; the feelings that break out, are so strong, as if it is me – the victim. At that very day my careless childhood finished.

Ferdinand read about eighteen-year-old Jean-Jacques when he worked as a servant in a rich house and when he, without any evident reason, stole an old useless silver-pink tape and laid the blame on a kind maid, an inoffensive creature, who never caused him any harm. Jean-Jacques vividly depicted this event, explaining nothing, simply saying that such an event took place, that is all. Ferdinand was horrified by the omnipotence of reckless and evil feelings that overcome over and over again even such people as Jean-Jacques.

Still deeper and more ruthlessly Jean-Jacques sank into the dark and slippery labyrinth of his "Self." He told about more and more "laughable and pitiful deeds," about naive pleasures of his flesh and about its refined delights taking place in his dreams.

Ferdinand read about bitter, heavy disappointment with Jean-Jacques' friends. Among them there were such great scholars as Diderot, Melkior Greem, the authors of "Encyclopaedia," even the great Voltaire, and nearly all of them united against Jean-Jacques, betrayed and persecuted him. The vain, vindictive, blind, polite, significant expressions on their faces were simply masks, behind which there were hidden distorted brutal mugs, and the only one who resisted Jean Jacques' pitiless tribunal was Jean-Jacques himself.

A human being is a social creature. He lives among other people, and that is why it is communication that has a great importance in the life of every person and the society as a whole. Communication is many-sided. Quite diverse contacts are formed among people – business, informative, emotional, intellectual. Each culture has its own type of communication. In some cultures, the divulsive nature of a man is revealed in an epistolary style in religious traditions and in friendly contacts. Modern culture is mainly indifferent of the human need to express the variety of his subtle emotions.

Identity is sameness of a man to himself. But the simplicity of such a definition is cunning, it is "worse than theft," (as the Russian proverb

says), because this sameness, equality with himself is the first, the basic question, the main riddle for a human being, because not only the limits, but even the coordinates and parameters of discussion about it is not given to the human being primordially. To be more exact, the notion of identity means a man's firmly adopted and personally accepted image of himself with all the wealth of his relations with the surrounding world, with the sense of his adequacy, the sense of stable possession of his "Self" irrespective of the changes in this "Self" and situations; the ability of a person to have adequate reactions to the problems that arise at every stage of a person's development. Identity is, first of all, the maturity of a person; the sources and secrets of the formation of this maturity are hidden in the previous stages of his ontogenesis.

Ericsson describes the formation of identity as a developing configuration that begins during childhood by way of successive synthesis and recrystallization of "Self." In such a configuration, there are integrated constitutional predisposition, peculiarities of libidous identifications, effective defend mechanisms and successful sublimations and roles being realized.

Alexander Lowel begins his book *The Betrayal of a Body* with the following assertion: "Usually people never ask themselves "Who am I?" Man accepts himself as something that goes without saying. Everyone has an identity card that helps to identify him. He knows by his conscience who he is, but there exists a deeper problem of identification. On the limits of conscience, man is destructed by dissatisfaction, he is troubled by the necessity of taking a decision, and he is worried by the feeling that his life is "missed." When this dissatisfaction is transformed into despondency and when his feeling of insecurity becomes panic, then man begins to ask "Who am I?" (Lowel 1999).

It seems to us that Lowel is not right. Naturally, one can assume that man has a certain, relatively integral, image of himself. For example, he does not doubt that he is a man (or a woman), young or old, married or not. But the question "Who am I?" arises not only in critical situations when, as A. Lowel thinks, the "facade" with which he identified himself was destructed. Man is constantly and painfully asking himself: Who am I? Even a child wants to know what he is like and what the difference between him and others is. That is to say, man always needs to verify his own image.

Let us assume that a girl is proud that she is a girl and not a boy. But she grows, becomes a young lady and her personal core is transformed, too. Now she can fall in love and her pride of belonging to the female sex acquires another content.

Classical psychoanalysis proceeded from the notion of the conflict of a person and society. Sharing Freud's opinion concerning the unconscious, Ericsson reveals the biosocial nature and adaptive character of human behavior. Identity is his central concept. In psychoanalysis, this term expresses psychological self-perception of man; it shows how he apprehends individual selfness and integrity.

In Ericsson's works, the main attention is paid to the psychosocial identity. Thus he indicates the whole complex of basic psychological, socio-historical and existential features of man. It is very difficult for a separate person to form a clear idea of himself because his inner world is too contradictory.

Nobody can reveal the inner nucleus of man's personality, though it seems so simple! We can recall I. Brodski's words: "To be frank, what is a self-portrait – it is a step aside from one's own body..." But how can one make such a step? We are surmounted by different passions, woven from illusions.

In his works, Ericsson shows how psychological and social parameters of human existence are interconnected. Spiritual expectations of a developing person with high standards can correspond to the spiritual contents of his time. In very rare cases the voice that comes from the depth of his nature may express the state of tension and ecstasy when man can say: "That is me!" – and this is the only way when psycho-social identity can be achieved. Such perception of himself is subjectively perceived as "the feeling of constant self-identification." Man must constantly coordinate himself with multiple social ties in order to feel integrated, to feel his wholeness. But social content is constantly changed. To keep one's private image, man must form his new identity instead of the old one that does not correspond to new socio-cultural conditions.

Ego-psychology is a separate trend studying human Ego. When Freud revealed the structure of man, he showed that Ego is always under a heavy press of both the unconscious and Super-Ego. A. Adler has already put forward the question: if Ego is so strictly determined by this situation, then how can we speak about real independent content of our "Self"? Since that time, psychology of unconsciousness was displaced by psychology of "Self" in the frame of psychoanalytical tradition.

It was Ericsson who showed the role of the Ego's integrity in the process of a person's adaptation to culture and society. Hitherto, psychoanalysis paid little attention to the fact of man's adaptation to reality, being mainly interested in the pathology of an individual



development. The mechanism of effective functioning of man in a concrete culture and epoch was not in the center of his interests.

The development of Ego is a process of both strengthening integration and differentiating the psychic apparatus that is going on during the whole life of man. But it can be interrupted during the period of the Oedipus complex by neurosis and psychosis. There is one more mechanism of consolidation that is revealed at the end of the juvenile period, which is less important during the following period of life.

The process of socialization is not at all linear and calm. There are intervals and regressions in it. Ericsson called the periods of regressions of Ego as "crisis of identity." He used the term "diffusion of identity" to denote a feebly integrated idea that man has of his own self and his unstable relations with other people. "Diffusion of identity" is practically a syndrome of a border-line situation of a person that is not so vividly noticeable at the less heavy pathologies in man's character.

If we want to show the difference among the psychotic, border-liner and neurotic types of patients, we must affirm that psychotics (people whose contact with reality is broken) have much weaker Ego(;) the image of self and of other objects are mainly mixed. Border-liners have more integral Ego, then psychotics. They are called "border-liner patients" because they stay between neurotics and psychotics. Their images of self and outer objects are mainly separated and have distinct borders. The borders of Ego are clearly defined. They usually have a syndrome of identity diffusion.

Neurotic patients have strong Ego, the images of the self and outer objects are clearly separated and have distinct borders. The syndrome of identity diffusion is not manifested. They have stable Ego; their super-Ego can be oppressive and sadistic, but it obtains a sufficient level of integration to guarantee the development of Ego and the possibility in any case a partly conflictless functioning of psyche.

Ericsson does not call into question the important role of sexuality in the origin of psychic disorder. But he was convinced that the investigation of the role of identity also becomes important, as it was at the Freud's epoch. He was sure that psychoanalysis could not say much concerning realization or violation of "self-synthesis," proceeding from the social organization. Ericsson makes creative use of the psychological factors in comprehending history that forms the psycho-historical method. Ericsson keeps a respectful attitude towards Freud's conception, but at the same time, he attaches great importance to the historical-cultural phenomena too, so psychoanalytical interpretation of history gradually becomes a fashion.

To understand Ericsson's psycho-historical method, we ask the question of how the aspiration to the future influences the dynamics of the historical process. The answer seems to be clear. Naturally, the orientation to the future helps the historical process and reveals potentials of the social development. This is the way of formation of the European history.

In Oriental cultures, history is understood otherwise – here, orientation to the past, to traditions is more typical. In modern China, a man who suggests some technical or social innovation does not ascribe it to himself. He tries to show that some hero in the past has invented this or that thing, not he.

But which of these approaches is more productive? European? It appears to be the way of shocks and catastrophes that strike out all the merits of the aspiration to the future. Oriental? It carries another danger – an inclination towards patriarchy and archaism. Yes, the respect to traditions does not unleash the destructive forces of history, but instead, it paralyses the progress...

On the base of his psycho-historical method, Ericsson comes to an unexpected conclusion: an ideal scenario for the historical process does not exist. Every nation works out its own strategy of surviving.

#### REFERENCES

- Schopenhauer, A. 1990. *Aphorismy Zhitejskoj mudrosty*. Moskva: Sovjetskij Pisatel.  
 Bakhtin, M. 1979. *Problemy Poetiki Dostoyevskogo*. Moskva: Sovetskaya Rossija.  
 Lowen, A. 1999. *Predatel'stvo Tela*. Ekaterinburg: Delovoj Mir.  
 Ericsson, E. 1996. *Identichnost. Yonost' i Krizis*. Moskva: Nauka  
 Adler, A. 1995. *Praktica i Teoria Individual'noy Psichologii*. Moskva: Nauka

**P. S. GUREVICH**

**M. A. SULTANOVA**

INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE RUSSIAN,  
 FEDERATION ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.