The phenomenon of verbal imagination: methodological problems

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The presence of a wide range of views on the phenomenon of "imagination" as the psychological basis of creative activity to developing new material and spiritual values suggests that this phenomenon in the scientific view is still a problem.

At the core of the problem is a contradiction: there is a creative activity that is carried out through imagination, but imagination itself as a phenomenon disappears during analysis, which makes it necessary to consider it based on a fundamentally new methodological approach. As a methodology proposed functional system approach.

Considered, based on the proposed approach, the functioning of the verbal imagination in the process of creating a verbal image as an artificial system.

In terms of the functional system approach, "verbal imagination" is defined as a metasystem - a complex of certain mental operations (actions) of a subject that arises and functions only when the subject needs to control and manage his cognitive processes during the creation of a verbal image.

Keywords: artificial system; functional-system approach; metasystem; verbal imagination; metacognitive processes.

Introduction

In the European culture, the creative ability in the development of new material and spiritual values has always been associated with such a psychological phenomenon as imagination. In the Western tradition, the universal creative abilities are considered in the concept of creativity, which by the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century began to actively displace the concept of "imagination" from scientific literature and everyday speech.

The "disappearance" of the imagination as a psychological phenomenon was also discovered by W. Wundt. T. Ribot considering essentially creative imagination as a single mental system, cannot reveal its mechanisms in creating "inventions" of different levels of complexity (Shragina, 2013a; б). The imagination is not considered as a psychic function in monographs on cognitive psychology. The "imagination" also disappeared from the "Cognitive processes" section of many manuals on general psychology (in particular, "The Psychology of the 21st Century" edited by V. N. Druzhinin, 2003). Accumulating all new diverse characteristics of the psychology of creative imagination, psychologists of the XX-XXI centuries did not come to the opportunity to synthesize them into a complete model of the functioning of the imagination and, as a result, to a common opinion.

The analysis of the definitions of the concept "imagination", starting from Aristotle and ending with the works of the authors of the XX and XXI centuries, showed that in all definitions, despite some disagreements, the function of imagination is the process that leads to the creation of various types of images. There are two recognized signs of imagination as a psychological phenomenon: the appearance of "novelty" in these images and the interrelation of imagination with cognitive and emotional processes.

The same analysis showed that the phenomenon of imagination is considered in at least four aspects:

- mental activity to create new images;
- creating images based on a mental program;
- imagination as a psychic phenomenon cannot be differentiated from other psychic phenomena;
- to understand the phenomenon of imagination, it must be considered based on a fundamentally new methodological approach (Shragina, 2016).

The presence of such a wide range of views suggests that the phenomenon of imagination in a scientific view is still a problem, based on a contradiction: there is a creative activity that is carried out through imagination, but the imagination itself as a psychological phenomenon disappears in the scientific analysis. As a result, the traditional concept of "imagination" remains vague and

unstrict, and to solve this problem, its analysis on a different methodological basis is necessary.

And if the crisis of understanding the essence of the concept of "imagination" in psychology determines **the relevance of this topic**, then the need to identify the features of the functioning of imagination as a process and the answer to the question posed determines the **purpose of the research**: to identify the features and uniqueness of imagination as a mental phenomenon.

Since the study of mental processes is only possible indirectly - through the study of the content-operational aspects of the activity, it is necessary to model the activity corresponding to the internal structure of a specific mental process (in this case - imagination) [16]. The search for a solution to an **imaginative** problem [3] can serve as a model for such a process. Since, studying any private form of creativity, we are faced with its general laws, we will narrow the problem. Of all the functions of imagination, we isolate only that part of them that is associated with **conscious creative activity**. As an **object of research**, we will consider the functioning of one of the types of "imagination" (hereinafter we will save the term, but we will take it in quotes) - verbal (verbal-logical), creating a verbal image of "ideal" objects, that is, objects and phenomena that were previously partially or completely in the experience of man not present.

The term "verbal image" will be understood as a representation (description) of an object (phenomenon, state) by means of a group of words that create a certain meaning by their association.

The subject of this research

are the psychological mechanisms of the functioning of the verbal "imagination" in the process of solving an imaginative task.

Results & Discussions

The development of science over the entire period of its existence followed the path of a progressive specialization of scientific disciplines, but already at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a reverse process began to emerge - first, to integrate adjacent and then rather distant at first glance branches. The aspiration for the unity of scientific knowledge is realized in fundamental concepts, which in the process of formation become the initial concepts of scientific theories and the conceptual form of the unity of science. One of these conceptual notions is the notion of "systemic", used in two senses. In the first one is put the identification of a system with an objective property of reality that is independent of man, which makes it an ontological, objectively dialectical property of all things. In the second case, systemic is a gnoseological phenomenon, knowledge about systems of different nature, obtained and accumulated by people, which manifest themselves as a system approach, a system method and a system.

In the opinion of G. A. Ball and V. A. Medintsev (2015), even between historically traditionally competing paradigms - natural science and humanitarian, in modern conditions of cultural development with rational humanistic ideals, their

necessary interaction becomes important, the most important mediator of the dialogue between them is the principle of systemicity.

Let us justify our methodological approach to the analysis of the problem of the phenomenon of the verbal imagination of the individual.

With a high differentiation of modern science at the level of a specific science, the implementation of the systemic principle provides a systematic approach as interdisciplinary, which allows to transfer laws, concepts and even research methods from one field of knowledge to another. This is especially necessary for psychology, the development of which at the present time requires a critical understanding of knowledge in order to eliminate accumulated contradictions and develop new conceptual and methodological approaches in research.

That is why, when analyzing problems, according to A.L.Zhuravlev (2007), psychology should go beyond the conventional boundaries between disciplines, using appropriate "languages" to describe various aspects of psychological reality — multi-level and interrelate.

Even more categorically I. E. Garber (2007, p.500) is considering the need for psychology to apply and integrate the knowledge of other sciences: "The current stage in the development of society gives psychology a unique chance to close the gap with the natural and engineering sciences. By insisting on their particular path, opposing the methods of studying and the technology of transforming the inner world with the fact that they are successfully used in the outside world, psychologists risk remaining in isolation from other scientists".

The emergence of conflicting views is characteristic to the development of each science: from time to time there are periods when the knowledge system that has developed in it does not provide conclusions that are adequate to the new results.

The explanation of the facts and the disclosure of the laws of the phenomena under study is a function of the methodology. Methodological knowledge has a multi-level structure, and their development is interconnected with the historical change of socio-economic and cultural environment, therefore, for the development of the methodology of psychological science it is also necessary to use general scientific interdisciplinary methodological approaches that consider these changes. The heuristic potential of a methodology is determined by its ability to efficiently perform its basic functions, that is, to ensure the possibility of developing new ways of knowing and developing ideas in specific problem situations.

In this connection, the question of creating universal, general scientific methods that increase knowledge in many disciplines is becoming ever more acute. This situation has increased attention to the method, which is considered as a means of realizing reflected and generalized scientific knowledge, the method of its existence and preservation, and therefore is the result of specific "objectification" of the ideas and scientific ideas of the researcher regarding the subject of study (Maksimenko, 2013).

The specificity of the application of systemic methodology in psychology lies in the fact that the psyche connects a person with the outside world, and it is this connection that creates the "man-world" system. In modern

psychology, according to D. A. Leontiev(2007), sharing this point of view, a person cannot be separated from this system and viewed outside of relations and ties with the world .

One of the methodological problems of psychology is the problem of isolating various phenomena in the holistic psyche, said V. A. Mazilov (2015), and cites attention and imagination as an example, the nature of which a number of authors explain from different points of view: concentration is not attention, but features of perception and the creation of new images is not a function of imagination, but of thinking.

The approach to solving the problem

The need for a methodology that allows analyzing the problems of psychology as a meta-science led us to a functional-system approach developed in technical creativity to find solutions to technical problems and implemented in the theory of inventive problem solving (TRIZ) (Meerovich, Shragina 2016; Shragina, 2018) . We used this approach to analyze the problem of the psychology of imagination.

In the context of the functional-system approach used by us, the verbal imagination can be viewed as a natural-artificial system — natural in origin and artificial as a product of sociocultural development. Let us define, from the point of view of the traditional approach to the imagination, verbal (verbal-logical) imagination as a kind of imagination that creates various images by means of language - from reproducing a description of real objects to fantastic ones that do not exist in reality. The process of constructing a verbal image can be viewed as an imaginative task, which is determined by the lack of information. For its "solution", the functioning of verbal imagination is necessary, and the verbal image is the "product" of the activity of this process, its result.

We have shown that the process of functioning of the verbal imagination in solving imaginative tasks by the example of constructing a verbal image of a non-existent object includes the following steps:

1. Generation of its meaning - the emergence of the plan.
2. Development of the plan - selection of parts (elements-words) that directly create the image, and their structuring, as a result of which it is realized - the construction of the "verbal image" system, which is provided by the interaction of the following main psychological components:
 - a) the relationship of intellectual activity and the emotional involvement of the subject in the design process;
 - b) emotional-evaluative attitude to the created image;
 - c) actual knowledge (elements of "content");
 - d) mental techniques - combining, analogizing, transforming, with the help of which the subject transforms his knowledge and constructs the image he needs;
 - e) the ability to construct a verbal image is positively associated with the ability to produce associations by similarity and visual images (Shragina, 2016).

As we can see, a detailed analysis of the stages of the process of creating a verbal image and a system of psychological components, the interaction of which ensures its creation, shows that among the mental processes and processes of their interaction that create a verbal image, there is no imagination! However, the image is created!

One of the types of verbal imagination is the poetic imagination, whose function is the creation of a poetic image. The poetic image constructs a new meaning significant for a person, reflecting the real world in unusual, unexpected combinations and connections. Through the poetic image, we communicate with our inner - ideal - world, comparing with anything real, we realize our feelings and emotional states.

The poetic image itself can be both descriptive and metaphorical. The process of metaphorization is not feasible without some assumption about the possibility of the similarity of incompatible entities. Removing the explicit and implicit limitations in violating the boundaries of such entities, the imagination transfers concepts from one area of knowledge to another, which leads to a collision of meanings, as, for example, in the poem by Vladislav Khodasevich "The fisherman":

I baited my hook
With a fluttering star.
The moon is my white float
Over the black water.
I sit, old man, at the eternal waters
And sing so softly,
And the sun pecks every day
On my bait.
And I lead him, lead
All day across the sky, but -
In the evening, swallowing a star,
It breaks away.
And soon my stock of stars
Will be spent, fisherman.
Hey, beware! At this hour
The earth will be by gloom covered.

A small poem by V. Khodasevich "The fisherman" is a detailed metaphor that is created by a whole complex of metaphorical images. They begin with the first lines: catch a sun, a hot space object with a fishing tackle, you can only do something appropriate, and the author "combines the incompatible": transfers the fish's property to a cold star, by one definition "trembling" turning it into a beating in hands, into a living one and warm, quite suitable for bait.

The author's poetic imagination provides "**a possible impossibility**" - it allows you to describe not what was, but what could be, removing the logical limitations (psychological barriers) from the reader and allowing his imagination to operate easily and freely with images. And the sky above his head, according to which the author leads the sunfish that had stumbled around the bait, is associated with the river under his feet.

But every evening, "swallowing a star", "the fish" breaks away ... And from the night you must start all over again ... Here is the essence of the whole poem-metaphor of Khodasevich: always the number of stars in the sky was an infinity image. "There is no number of stars, the abyss - the bottom" said M. V. Lomonosov. Khodasevich and here he finds an original move that resolves this contradiction: "And soon my stock of stars / Will be spent, fisherman." - and we understand that stars are years, and if "the water is eternal", then his life, the life of "fisherman" - it is not eternal ... The poetry illuminates our life, and if we continue this thought

further, then without it the spiritual life of mankind is impossible ...

In this poem, the author's need (intention) is to show his view of the role of the poet (creator) and the meaning of poetry (art) in people's lives and to cause the reader to understand this idea. In order to open this fairly well-developed topic in a new way, Khodasevich selects the image elements he needs: poetry (art) is the sun, and the poet (creator) is a fisherman who every day "catches" him with a "bait" star and leads through the sky. But every evening the sun, "swallowing a star," falls off the hook, and the fisherman's bait-star supply is limited, there an hour may come when the sun does not "bite" the poet's bait, and then there will be darkness in the world.

Combining these elements into a holistic poetic image creates a new meaning - poetry illuminates people's life. And the reader has an understanding: without the Poet, the creator of Beauty and the desire for it of man, life will cease to exist, like Life on Earth without the sun.

The creation of a poetic image involves many factors that make this process a unique individual creative process. But the leading factor is the personality of its author, since the process of poetic imagination includes, above all, the **motive of choosing** one expression or another, depending on the intent and immersion of this choice in some pragmatic interest of the subject.

Let us analyze the process of constructing a verbal image as a new artificial system: "How does this system arise and at the expense of what does it "work", fulfill its function?"

In terms of the functional-systems approach, the process of constructing a verbal image consists of the following stages considered by us: the **need** arising from the author to express his emotional-semantic relationship to an object (phenomenon, event) appears as a **concept** — a **system-forming factor**. To implement the plan, he **selects elements** (words) **and structures them** - builds in a certain way. There is a **new system - a verbal image**. The structural organization of selected words creates a **systemic property** that **produces a systemic effect** — it evokes an emotional-semantic reaction that the author needs.

But in order for such a reaction to "take place" - in order for the desired system property to emerge due to the selection and structuring of elements, the author needs a "control system" that will perform "control-integrating" actions on the assessment, selection and structural organization of individual elements. These actions, which create a system of selected elements, possessing the necessary systemic properties and ensuring the achievement of a systemic effect (result), - **are systemically important and have traditionally been considered as imagination**.

The need to identify in the personality psyche the process that controls cognitive processes has been raised throughout the history of the development of the psychology of the entire twentieth century. The problem of management in any field of activity is connected with the choice of the necessary parameters characterizing the process and the control of their functioning. The management of the processes of the cognitive sphere is the subject of a study of metacognitive psychology, and the ability of the psyche to

carry out the "process of managing processes" is considered as a metacognitive process. Our theoretical and methodological analysis of the specificity of metacognitive processes showed that they were distinguished based on their function — to arbitrarily control cognitive processes to achieve the desired result and thereby control their cognitive activity. These processes include active control over the cognitive actions performed by the subject and the establishment of the necessary links between them in order to move towards the goal set.

Returning to the analysis of the process of creating a verbal image, the aforesaid allows us to conclude: **a complex of controlling-integrating actions** for the realization of a plan in conscious creative activity that create a system with the necessary system property that ensures the achievement of a systemic effect (result) from individual elements is a **system-forming function** and was traditionally regarded as imagination.

All this allows us to conclude that the psychological phenomenon, which was traditionally defined as "imagination" and "disappeared" in the analysis, can be attributed to metacognitive processes.

And in terms of the functional-systemic approach "verbal imagination" we can define as a metasystem - a complex of certain mental operations (actions) of a subject that arises and functions only when the subject needs to control and manage their cognitive processes during the creation of a verbal image. The interaction of these operations creates a system property that provides the subject with the ability to control and manage the process.

"Verbal fantasy" as a metasystem exists only in the process, during the execution of its function, therefore the form of its existence can be considered as a metasystem function - a mental function that performs control-integrating actions.

In this case, another natural question arises: how is the "process management process" performed — who performs these control-integrating actions?

A variant of the answer to this question is offered by S.D. Maksimenko (2006, p. 38; p.47), considering the personality as "a form of human psyche existence, representing integrity, capable of self-development, self-determination, conscious objective activity and self-regulation and having its own unique inner world" [8]. And emphasizes: "Therefore, fundamentally new mechanisms are formed in the personality, which are controlled consciously by the person himself". Developing the idea of S.D. Maksimenko, a person can be defined not just as a complex open system, but as a metasystem formation regarding mental phenomena of a person. This approach allows us to explain the ability of the individual to modeling and self-modeling (Maksimenko, Shragina 2016).

Conclusion

The results of applying the complex of two approaches - functional-systemic and metacognitive - allow us to conclude that "verbal imagination" is a metasystem - a complex of certain mental operations (actions) of a subject that arises and functions only when the subject needs to control and manage their cognitive processes in the way of creating a verbal image.

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