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EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND IMMANENT EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITY IN HUMAN MINDS

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ABSTRACT

Vygotsky insisted the need of studying the human consciousness for total understanding the human mind throughout his life. For describing the real human mental activities, Vygotsky focused on the different two phases of the actual mental activities, i.e., verbal thinking and the emotional experience. He considered the emotional experience (*perezhivanie*) as emerge from the interconnection between individual personal activity and the environment. In this paper, Vygotsky's concept of the emotional experience is interpreted as the actual expressive activity to shape and externalize one's own innate thought or emotion. Artistic expressive behaviors of the artist and preschool children are discussed to examine the dual interconnected processes between the innate mental world and the environmental outer world.

Key Words: Vygotsky, consciousness, emotional experience, expressive behavior

INTRODUCTION

Understanding human consciousness is a thematic thread running through Vygotsky's psychological research. Traditionally, the discipline of psychology has treated the problem of consciousness as a phenomenon not amenable to scientific psychological research. This is because consciousness is held to be a phenomenon of an individual's inner world, and therefore objective study is seen as impossible. As a result, consciousness has come to be treated as subjective and ideational. However, this understanding of consciousness dominant in psychology needs to be revised, for it is impossible to grasp an individual psychologically without dealing with the problem of consciousness.

In Vygotsky's critical article about psychological thought and its methodology, "The historical meaning of the crisis in psychology" (1925), he described research on problems related to consciousness. He concluded that consciousness as a specific category, as a special type of being, is not found. It proves to be a very complex structure of behavior, in particular, the doubling of behavior.

Vygotsky suggested that human consciousness can be understood as a system of the various functions of mental action. In Vygotsky's article "On psychological systems" (1930), which was written at the last stage of his life. He stated the next followings. "In the process of development, and in the historical development of behavior in particular, it is not so much the functions which change (these we mistakenly studied before).

What is changed and modified are rather the relationships, the links between the functions. New constellations emerge which were unknown in the preceding stage. That is why intra-functional change is often not essential in the transition from one stage to another. It is inter-functional changes, the changes of inter-functional connections and the inter-functional structure which matter. The development of such new flexible relationship between functions we will call a psychological system” (p. 92).

This passage reveals that Vygotsky considered the human mind to emerge from the interrelations of the various mental functions, and therefore human consciousness is an active process within a mental network. It can be concluded that Vygotsky’s theory of consciousness is anti-substantialism, and then he assumed consciousness is an attribution of form and a process of actualization.

HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AS ACTUALIZATION

Vygotsky figured centrally in a large amount of psychological research on consciousness, and he took his theoretical position throughout his life that consciousness emerges from the process of action. Furthermore, he emphasized the indispensability of consciousness in grasping humans as a totality.

Vygotsky’s life research can be seen as dedicated to understanding and elucidating human consciousness which was not treated legitimately in the tradition of human psychological study. His 1933 essay, “The Problem of Consciousness,” dating from the last years of his life, dealt with the origin of consciousness and how consciousness is produced. Vygotsky suggested that human consciousness can be understood as a system of the various functions of mental action. He described human action as words and thought, or “the sense-creating activity of meanings leads to a certain semantic structure of consciousness itself” (p. 137). Vygotsky held that psychologists erred in understanding human consciousness as a substance. That is, they thought that the human minds or mental abilities were truly existed in the individual mental world innately.

In a different point of view, Vygotsky emphasized on treating the human minds as stand point from the attribution theory. He stressed on that the human minds or mental abilities were appeared and presented only through the individual actual activities.

Vygotsky’s Research of Thinking and Speech

In dealing with the problem of thinking and speech in concrete research on human minds and attribution theory, Vygotsky – who wanted solve the puzzle of consciousness and human minds – engaged the mutual relationship between thinking and speech to conceive of human consciousness as a systemic integration of the two. Vygotsky(1933) described human action as speech and thinking, or “the sense-creating activity of meanings leads to a certain semantic structure of consciousness itself” (p. 137). In his important work, “Thought and Speech”, Vygotsky (1934) told as his conclusion of this book, “Thinking and speech are the key to understanding the nature of human consciousness. ...Consciousness is reflected in the word like the sun is reflected in a droplet of water. The word is a microcosm of consciousness, related to consciousness like a living cell is related to an organism, like an atom is related to the cosmos. The meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness”(pp. 433-434).

The goal of understanding an individual's inner conscious world lay behind Vygotsky's attempt to unravel consciousness and the human mind by attending to concrete activities of the consciousness in thinking. Therefore, "Thought and Speech" concludes by stating that a hidden internal consciousness exists in the thoughts always behind our words. There is always a background thought, a hidden subtext in our speech.

In "Thought and Speech," Vygotsky takes as his departure point the premise that human consciousness holds two different inter-functional connections with thinking and speech, and he holds that the problem consciousness can be clarified by examining these systemic interconnections. This is visible in the research report on his motivations to become a research. This research report was presented at the combined session of the psychological and reflexological sections of the 2nd All-Russian congress on psycho-neurology in Leningrad, 1924. In this report, Vygotsky contended that human consciousness cannot be elucidated only by responses at the behavioral level, as asserted by reflexology and behaviorism. Rather, one must employ a research method that places importance on verbal responses, which only humans can provide. This research report expresses an analysis opposing psychological research based on Pavlov's and Bekhterev's conditioned reflex school. Based on this research report, Vygotsky opened the Psychological Institute in Moscow for psychological research. In this research report, Vygotsky mentioned as follows in briefly that Bekhterev and his school insisted to choose the objective reflective response for understanding human mind and to reject the subject's verbal report because of its subjective response. Reflexology has to study both thought and the whole mind if it wishes to understand behavior. That which is only visible through the microscope or telescope or with x-ray is objective too. Inhibited reflexes (i.e., verbal response) are equally objective. "The act of thought, the act of consciousness is in our opinion not a reflex, that it cannot also be stimulus, but it is transmission mechanism between systems of reflexes" (p. 34). In the sentences which we have referred to here, Vygotsky might be use a word of reflex as a meaning of a mental response. In another part, Vygotsky stressed the significance of verbal behavior upon the human conscious processes. "The word that is heard is a stimulus, the pronounced word a reflex that creates the same stimulus. These reversible reflexes, that create the basis for consciousness, also serve as the basis of social interaction and the collective co-ordination of behavior, which, by the way, points to social origin of consciousness. ...The source of social behavior and consciousness also lies in speech in the broad sense of the word. Speech is on the one hand a system of reflexes of social contact and on the other hand primarily a system of reflexes consciousness, that is, for the reflection of the influence of other systems. That is why the key to the solution of the problem of the external Ego, of the cognition of another person's mind, lies here" (p. 35). From this inserted sentences, we can confirm that Vygotsky's research theme especially in his "Thought and Speech" which he devoted all his life to study was already established in basically.

Indeed, Zavershneva, who is a young Vygotskian researcher in Russia, has mentioned that from Vygotsky's memo of his writing plan he had planned to write on the problem of human consciousness as a continuation of his "Thought and Speech". So, he may

have planned to make “Thought and Speech” as an introduction to what might have been “Problem of Human Consciousness”(Kamiya, 2008).

Vygotsky’s Concept of Personality

In Vygotsky’s unpublished manuscript, “Concrete human psychology” he stated that we must describe the active and complex nature of the human consciousness, and or the facts of the mental conflict were in needed to find the individual inner mental world which was occurred in the daily human relationships. He produced the concept the human personality or “the form of drama” as for the total understanding of the concrete human mental functioning at the endpoint of his research life. He (1929) concluded that psychology must be humanized, and the concept of “the drama” in the individual personality is the sense of human psychology in this last part of the manuscript. Thus, Vygotsky thought that a drama truly full of internal struggle is only appeared in the dynamic of human personality. Of course, Vygotsky(1929) mentioned the drama in the individual mind was occurred in the social relationship and social interaction. “For us man is a social person = an aggregate of social relations, embodied in an individual (psychological functions built according to social structure.)”(p. 66). “... the personality = an aggregate of social relations, the dynamics of the personality = drama are created in the environment, i.e., sociogenesis is the one true perspective” (p. 68).

Then Vygotsky writes that within social relationships, phenomena finally move to the individual’s interior, and that they come to function as personality restraints on interactions. “If relationships among people genetically underlie psychological functions, then the basic principle of the functioning of higher functions (personality) is social, entailing interaction [autostimulation, “to enter into control of one’s own body”, control – noted by Vygotsky] of functions, in place of interaction between people”(p. 59). If it is the case that Vygotsky thought that human consciousness occurs within real life, then it is necessary to understand both thoughts and emotions as a totality if one wants to grasp the human mind or consciousness.

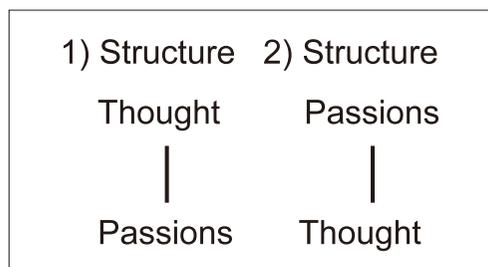


Figure 1 Interconnection between thought and passion (from Vygotsky, 1929)

DIALECTICAL RELATION BETWEEN INNER MENTAL WORLD AND OUTER WORLD

Vygotsky’s Thesis of Experience (Perezhivanie)

Vygotsky(1933)stated that psychology could not solve the problem of the human consciousness at all in his “The Problem of Consciousness”. Psychology has attempted

to elucidate the mental system as a faculty that controls the behavior of the human consciousness and to explain the behavior itself, as in association psychology. Therefore, in order to investigate human consciousness, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between activity (behavior) and emotional experience, as well as the relationship among the psychological faculties constituting human consciousness. In his final years, Vygotsky came to maintain that to elucidate human consciousness it is necessary to properly locate interiorized innate and emotional experience within the world of active individual consciousness. As Vygotsky considered the meaning of a word is a unity of speech and thinking in “Thought and Speech”, he also thought that experience is the unity of the personality and the environment. The unity of environmental and personality factors is achieved in a series of experience. In the paper, “The crisis at age seven” he stated, “experience must be understood as the external relation of the child as a person to one factor or another of reality”(p. 294). Thus experience is the actual dynamics of the unity of consciousness, that is, the whole which comprises consciousness.

We can confirm the Vygotsky’s concept of the emotional experience and his thesis in his paper, “The problem of the environment”(1935). We are able to find the relationship which exists between the child and its environment, the child’s emotional experience (*perezhivanie*), in other words how a child becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to a certain event. “An emotional experience(*perezhivanie*) is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e. that which is being experienced – an emotional experience(*perezhivanie*) is always related to something which is found outside the person – and on the other hand, what is represented is how I ,myself, am experiencing this, i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environment characteristics are represented in an emotional experience(*perezhivanie*); everything selected from the environment and all the factors which are related to our personality and are selected from the personality. ...So, in an emotional experience(*perezhivanie*) we are always dealing with an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics which are represented in the emotional experience(*perezhivanie*)”(p. 343, van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994).

Vygotsky said to be necessary by clarifying the emotional events in individual human mind as well as actualization of thought and language to catch human being mind above all human consciousness definitely. Because Vygotsky thought about human consciousness as psychological system that various psychological functions links mutually. We can summarize the key thought of Vygotsky in Figure 2.

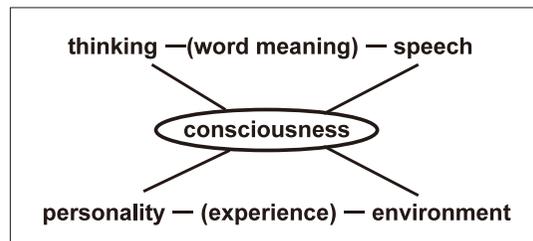


Figure 2 Schema of Vygotsky’s idea of consciousness (from Vygotsky, 1929)

Mori's Concept of Experience(keiken)

Similar to the Vygotsky's concept of the emotional experience(perezhivanie), Japanese philosopher, Arimasa Mori postulated the concept of the innateness of experience. Mori separates experienced phenomena into simply those that are simply collected ("taiken") from "keiken." For Mori, "keiken" are experiences to which the self ascribes personal meaning and in which a fundamental discovery is made. One's own view of one's world changes through this, and the meaning of what is seen becomes completely new through this change occurring within oneself. One's total perspective on the world becomes clearer. Through speech, one's previous perceptions of the situation as well as one's internal world become one's own. The impetus behind discovering this world in the attribution of meaning to one's internal world is what Mori terms "keiken," and innate suggestion by oneself ("naiteki unagashi") creates "keiken" within the self. For Mori, in connecting to the world, internal perceptions felt through intercourse with one's environment are corrected and are perceived with one's own meaning, and one develops through this process. It is not only through speech that personal meaning is felt internally. What is common to Vygotsky's emotional experience (perezhivanie) and Mori's "keiken" is that phenomena encountered in the environment are revised within an individual's internal world, which occurs in the world of human consciousness.

The Needs of Expressive Activities for Defining Mental World

The following sentence is inserted from "Concrete human psychology" by Vygotsky. "The personality becomes a personality itself by virtue of the fact that it is in itself, through what it previously showed is itself for others. This is the process of the development of the personality. Hence, it is clear why everything that is internal in higher functions was necessarily once external: it was for others what today it is for itself"(p. 56). Vygotsky concluded that the means of acting upon oneself is first a means of acting on others and the action of others on one's personality.

As from this Vygotsky's suggestion, it is needed that internal mental world and Vygotsky considered consciousness a behavior or an action related to the will and purposes people direct towards the outer world. Consciousness emerges in the process of producing expressive actions and words. Thus, it is essential to direct scholarly attention towards the act of expression produced by words or the body.

INTERTWINING BETWEEN THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE

Mutual Relationship between Externalization and Internalization

Merleau-Ponty's keywords for understanding thought are "intertwining (chiasm)" and "reversibility." According to Merleau-Ponty, we experience the undividedness of "the sensing" and "the sensed" through embodied perception. One example he frequently uses is that when we grasp our intertwined left and right fingers, we don't know which hand is grasping and which hand is being grasped. In such cases, the perception of chiasm or reversibility emerges between the left and right hands. The same thing occurs when we see things. When we look towards a target, we simultaneously see it internally. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in "Eye and Mind" (1964),

“Something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible for itself by virtue of sight of things; in that place where there persists, like to the mother water in crystal, the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed”(p. 163).

Merleau-Ponty discussed his argument about art especially the pictorial expression intensively in “Eye and Mind” and “Cezanne’s Doubt”. The following summarizes the main points emphasized in these essays. Artistic expression is an intertwining between “the inside of the outside”(artist’s intention of expression or interpretation about the outer world) and “the outside of the inside”(artist’s expressive activity). Therefore, what the artist wants to express (the artist’s internal world) becomes clear through putting into form what he or she wants to express. In other words, we can say the pictorial works are never the visual copy of the objects. It is clear that there is some sort of affinity and continuity between a word of art and the object of perception. And what that affinity is depends on the artist’s imagination and expression. Because an artist draws inspiration from external objects in painting a world, there is some affinity. Therefore, the painting expresses “the outside” through “the inside” of the world represented by the artist. Simultaneously, the artist’s imaged and represented world are not unrelated to the outside world creating “the outside of the inside” (Figure 3).

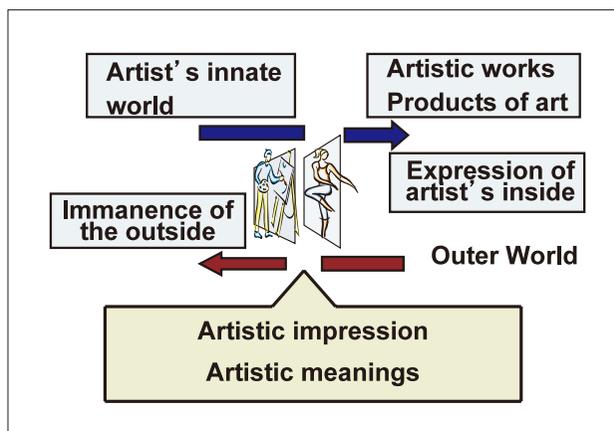


Figure 3 Artist's expressive activity

When he painted people, figures, and faces, Cezanne derived his ideas from the person's soul and thoughts, depicting them abstractly. “One's personality is seen and grasped in one's glance, which is, however, no more than a combination of colors. Other minds are given to us only as incarnate, as belonging to faces and gestures”(p. 16, Merleau-Ponty, 1948). From others, we place form onto the basic experience perceived and must express them. This is what Cezanne continued to inquire into. Merleau-Ponty pointed out the above in his “Cezanne's Doubt”.

A painter can find his new visual perception by means of drawing the picture. A painter's drawing results in the discovery of a new sense of vision. He become to find the invisible things until then through his expression. So “the painter's vision is a continued birth” (p. 168, Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Just as the function of words is to name,

that is, to grasp the nature of what appears to us in a confused way and to place it before us as a recognizable object, the expression is up to the artist to objectify and arrest.

The following problem emerges: how is an affinity between the inner and the outer is established? This is the central problem of representation. In the creation of an image exists the medium of similarity or proxy. However, in a physical image, the physical thing to which it corresponds does not directly create the image we have of it. There must be something grasped as a resemblance in the object and vision, or the thing that connects the image. Merleau-Ponty cited the following Giacometti's message, who was a famous sculptor, "What interests me in all painting is resemblance, that is, what is resemblance for me" (p. 165, Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

The problem Merleau-Ponty turned away from that must be solved is, What is the chiasm (intertwining) relationship between the "thing seen" (i.e. the external object) and the "thing unseen" (the representer's internal world)?

Illustration 1

Mituo Fushikida is a famous oil painter in Hokkaido, and he is deeply influenced from Cezanne's style of expression and his thought of art. The paintings Fushikida created before he went to Paris consisted only of black and white depictions of things just as they were, in a rational and logical manner by employing incremental lines. This rational mode of expression based on lines was transformed by the landscape of the south of France. There he became acquainted with the importance of representing the sensations that developed within himself through his own perceptions. Figures 4 and 5 present examples from the numerous landscapes Fushikida painted.



Figure 4 Mental hospital in Camus(Fishikida, 1970)



Figure 5 Space of the life (Fishikida, 1984)

He looks at the external scene, interprets what he perceives from it, and then represents that concretely in the painting. Through repeating this activity, he tries to represent space and living things. The origin of his representation lies in the perceptions produced within himself. Therefore, sometimes his landscape paintings are abstractly represented. It is claimed that in actuality, he takes the world into himself more by approaching objects through the senses than by approaching objects through

sight alone. “The existence of the living must break into the world of poetry (art) through the senses. For this, a delicate power for concentrating speed, intuition, perception, and reason is necessary” (p. 99, 1997). Because he could not skillfully express in words the perception of life created within himself, he represented it in pictures. Bearing in mind Arimasa Mori, who grasped in words this sort of perception of life, he quotes from the middle of his essay (1997). Mori’s concept of experience is referred to above in this paper.

The origin behind Fushikida’s pictorial representation was existential sensation created within the self that was receiving stimulation from the external world. Simultaneously, he placed importance on a spatial construction that allowed rationally representing the sensations. In his spatial constructions that gave a single form to his personal sensations, Fushikida aimed for the conflict and the integration of sensation and reason. Trying to grasp the real form of living people, Fushikida has been painting human forms existing within time and space for over thirty years. One of his most important themes in his artistic expressions is the representation of things existing in time and space. In order to do that, he often chooses to represent moving people (Figures 6 and 7). These works dynamically grasp the existence of a person traversing across time. Moreover, the bilateral symmetry of the composition emphasizes the movement and its directionality.



Figure 6 Swimming peoples (Fushikida, 1987)

Figure 7 To the wild nature, once again (Fushikida, 1990)

In this way, Fushikida constantly creates the intertwining between “the inside of the outside” and “the outside of the inside” in the world of his artistic creation.

Illustration 2

Paintings visually express the outside world, but they are not simply duplicated copies of the external world. Even if both paintings and photographs share in common the representation of external appearances, their forms of expression differ. Paintings are externalized representations of things perceived as the inner world, or the indwelling, of phenomena in the external world. This is the same in the case of

children's pictures.

Preschool children often draw multiple events on a single picture. Luquet calls this style of picture "intellectual realism", referring to the expression of events on a piece of paper as narration with graphics (Thomas & Silk, 1990). The following two pictures were drawn by two five-year-olds on one day trip (Figure 8 and 9). These pictures take the form of a narration with graphics of their own experiences of the trip.



Figure 8 Example of drawing by Ai

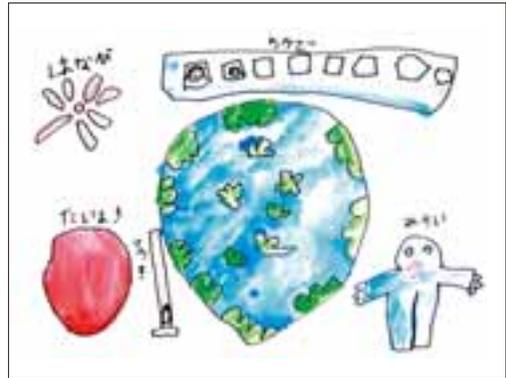


Figure 9 Example of drawing by Mei

They depict as a painting the joy remaining within one's heart after a one-day. Children's pictures externalize what they feel and express their internalizations in form. At first glance, children's pictures seem to depict events at random. However, if one looks at the construction process of their pictures, they express the things they have experienced themselves in their own way and as temporally gathered events. For example, the child's picture in Figure 8 is drawn in an order similar to Figure 10. In the first step, the events at the preschool in the evening are depicted. In the second step, previous events are temporally depicted in the representation of playing in a park during the morning. Then in the third step, the evening events once again return, and activities at a camp fair and playing with fireworks are depicted. Even though the temporal flow of the order of what is depicted in the picture is not correct, the child still expresses in his own way his own experiences in groupings.

We live in houses, streets, cities, and most of the time we see them only through the human actions which put them to use. The things we experience in the real world are the contents we want to express in pictures. Children represent these as continuous events on a single piece of paper. This is because such a means of expression suits what they want to draw. In "Expression and the Child's Drawing" (1969), Merleau-Ponty calls this means of expression often used by children "graphic narration." Merleau-Ponty wrote that the western geometric perspective or two-dimensional perspective does not correspond to the "perceived world," but is simply one "arbitrary interpretation" of the perceived world. Geometric perspective should be considered the best and final method of painting.

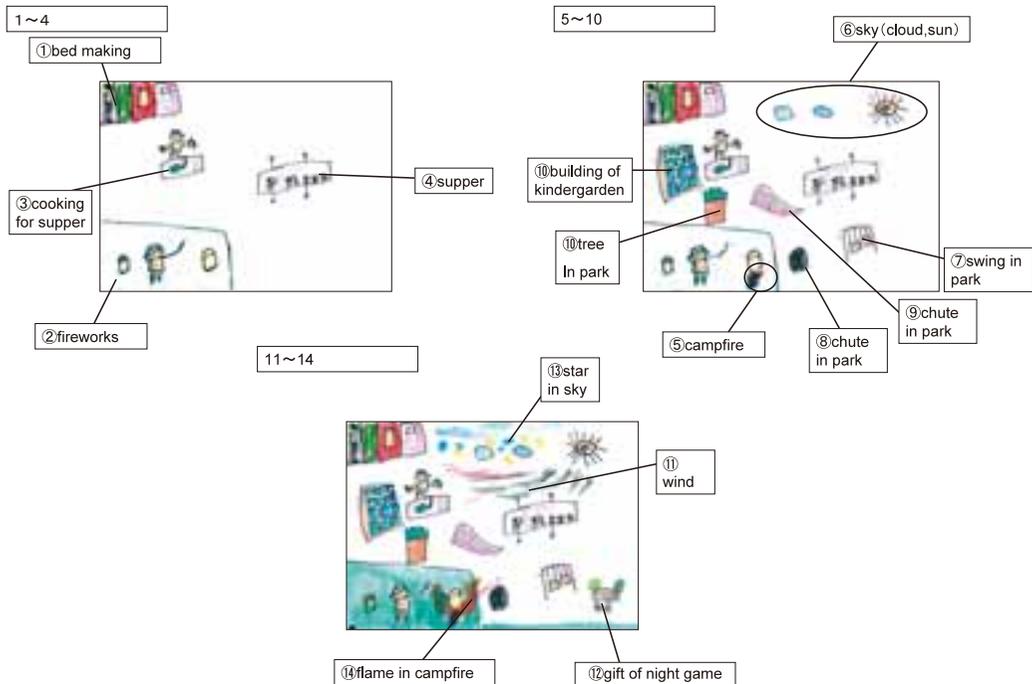


Figure 10 Construction process of Ai's drawing

“The child’s ‘graphic narration’ combine the successive scenes of a story into a single picture, drawing in the invariable elements of the scenery only once, or even drawing in just once each of the characters taken in an attitude suited to a given moment in the story. Thus the child is the sole hearer of the entire story at the time considered, and all the scenes communicate through the thickness of time, staking out the story further and further on. To the eye of the ‘reasonable’ adult, who conceives time as a series of juxtaposed temporal points, such a narrative would be likely to seem broken and obscure. But if we follow time as we live it, the present still touches and still holds the past in its hand” (p. 151).

CONCLUSION

This paper argued that psychological research aiming to clarify the human mind must engage with the problem of human consciousness. However, psychology even today holds that human consciousness is subjective and ideational, and does not take it as an object of research. Nevertheless, Vygotsky provides the final fort by engaging with the fundamental problem of clarifying human consciousness – a problem that psychology must address. As long as this remains unclarified, psychology will not be able to understand human beings. Vygotsky held that human consciousness is not a substance but rather actual psychological functions. That is, consciousness can become an object of psychological research by treating it as attribution. In “Thought and Speech,” he attempted to unravel the world of the consciousness by looking at the actual mental activities of thinking and speech. On the other hand, Vygotsky also claimed that

it was necessary to see the various mental functions of consciousness as a linked psychological system. In order to grasp human consciousness as a whole, it is necessary to treat the activities in the environment as innate and emotional experiences created within the individual consciousness. Through his concept of emotional experience (*perezhivanie*), Vygotsky attempted to grasp the form of the interaction between the inner world of the human mind and the outer world of the environment.

This paper attempted to engage Vygotsky's concept of emotional experience (*perezhivanie*) in objective form and took up the examples of artists' and children's representations of movement. The analysis of the artistic works showed that artists revise once again in their inner world the things they saw in their external environment that impressed them, and they try to express in concrete form this experience and impression. This is the very process Merleau-Ponty (1964) terms the two simultaneous actions of "the inside of the outside" and "the outside of the inside." This paper discusses children's drawings as one illustration. In their drawings, children express in their own way the things they felt in the events they experienced. Therefore, children's drawings can be seen as the external representation in the form of a drawing of what Vygotsky terms emotional experience (*perezhivanie*). Personal experiences are expressed as a "graphic narration" of a selection of several things that made an impression in a way befitting a child. Children do not concern themselves with the adult-like conventional manner of expression, but freely employ a manner of expression that skillfully portrays their own emotional experience.

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