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Coexperiencing Psychotherapy as a Psychotechnical System

The main challenge of contemporary psychology is to fill the increasing split between research psychology and psychological practice. A creative response to this challenge is found in a general methodological approach, which L.S. Vygotsky called the “philosophy of practice” or “psychotechnics.” This article describes a psychotechnical system called “coexperiencing psychotherapy.” This psychotechnical system combines science, practice, and education. From the perspective of general psychological theory the article describes a model of an “integral unit of psychological analysis,” in which the main general psychological categories (activity, set, relationship, and communication) are synthesized. In addition, the article presents a theoretical

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interpretation of experiencing (perezhivanie) as a productive meaning-generating activity. Finally, conceptual models of levels, registers, and structures of consciousness are proposed. From a psychotherapeutic practice perspective, a system of a "psychotechnical unit" of the psychotherapeutic process and structure of situation is given. The general method of coexperiencing psychotherapy is "understanding." The educational dimension of the psychotechnical system remains outside the scope of the current article.

A philosophical-methodological explanation of the psychotechnical system

The overall idea of the study is to construct a framework for the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy. The task of the first part of the work is to describe the sociocultural and historical-psychological context in which coexperiencing psychotherapy is being born. It should be refuted that its emergence could be considered in terms of the modernist ideology of a "project," that is, a purposeful action that deliberately exhibits its arbitrariness and historical lack of necessity. Rather it should be placed in the paradigm of "reflective traditionalism" (Averintsev, 1996), as an attempt at a conscious continuation and development of a chosen scientific tradition. Work on the study occurred at the "times of changes," when "traditionalism" was not held in high regard. For this reason it is especially important to emphasize that the internal necessity of the study and its scientific justification lay in an attempt to carry out a historical mission of the Russian psychological tradition, and above all of its branch that is known as the "Vygotsky–Leontiev" line.

From psychological practice to psychotechnical theory

The radical changes that began in Russian psychology in the 1980s demanded a special methodological analysis (Vasilyuk, 1992a). The appearance during those years of the first psychological centers marked the birth of independent psychological practice. The historical significance of that event is hard to overstate: psychology acquired its *body* at counseling centers. Those centers have the same significance for psychology as schools for pedagogy, churches for religion, and clinics for medicine.

Psychological practice and practical psychology

It is important to differentiate the terms “practical psychology” and “psychological practice.” “Practical psychology” implies the participation of psychologists in someone else’s social practice. Each of these practices appoints its own ‘department’ name to the related area of psychology (medical psychology, pedagogical psychology, sports psychology, etc.). Each of these social practices imposes on psychology its final goals and tasks, values and criteria, and alien categories, and determines a limited zone of professional rights and professional responsibility. The result is that the psychologist tends to become alienated from his own way of thinking—psychological thinking.

Psychology and Practice

For Russian psychology, the relationship with practice (always someone else’s practice, because psychology did not have its own) was a “foreign-policy” relationship and was defined by the principle of intrusion. From the perspective of practice, psychology in this regard was considered merely as a source of useful (albeit optional) prescriptions rather than a domain of knowledge and responsible action in its own right.¹

The emergence of psychological practice per se changes the relationship so that psychology becomes not simply “science” and “practice,” where practice becomes the primary, system-forming element that requires a new type of theory. And so the “philosophy of practice,” that is, “methodology of psychotechnics” (Vygotsky), should become the foundation of new psychology.

Academic and psychotechnical theory

Psychological theory based on the philosophy of practice may be defined as “psychotechnical.” Its epistemology differs significantly from traditional, “academic” epistemology, or to be more precise, from naturalistic psychological theory. Table 1 shows the results of a comparative analysis of two different types of cognition: “natural-scientific” and “psychotechnical,” which characterize these two types of frameworks.

Table 1

A Comparison of Psychotechnical and Academic Theory

Aspect of cognition	"Academic" theory	Psychotechnical theory
Philosophy and methodology	Gnoseologism, naturalism	Philosophy of practice
Values	External relative to cognition	Intrinsic to the cognitive process
Target	Academic psychologist or specialist in another profession	Practicing psychologist
Cognitive subject	Neutral, detached observer	Interested, participatory. "Collective" subject
Contact between researcher and the test subject	Minimized, standardized, emotionally neutral	Intensive, unique, emotional. Unifies, consists of subjects in a psychotechnical situation
Process and procedures of study	Rigorous and fixed within the limits of the given experiment of the program of procedures	Flexible, unique procedures that react sensitively to the current situation in the experiment
Types of knowledge circulating in the study	Knowledge is only "objective," nonpersonalized, in the third person—about "them." The knowledge and words of test subjects about themselves are merely one of the facts for "objective" analysis	Internal, personal, semantic knowledge must be present in the study. This is knowledge "about you," "about oneself," "about us," and at the same time it is "your," "my," and "our" knowledge
Subject matter and method	The method separates out the subject matter from reality and represents it in "the form of an object" that is observed from outside	The method unifies the participants in a psychotechnical situation and itself becomes a subject matter of the study
The central subject matter of the study	An appropriate method of study is selected for the central subject matter	The central subject matter is selected for an effective practical method so that the practical method is simultaneously the optimal research method for that subject matter*

*The relationship between "analysis" as a method and "the unconscious" as a central subject matter meets the methodological condition that makes psychoanalysis a psychotechnical system, in contrast, say, to behavioral therapy. The latter's quite effective methods are completely incapable of performing the function of a research procedure in any full measure for the central subject matter—the "operant reflex."

The methodological meaning of the psychological schism

The mass proliferation of psychological services and the emergence of independent psychological practice have created the necessary conditions for the methodological transformation of Russian psychology. Conditions, however, do not automatically turn into a result. By the mid-1990s a schism in Russian psychology had become obvious. It turned out to be split into two sovereign republics that did not have enough communication with each other, with different leading centers, different authorities, methods of economic existence, and different systems of education and channels of interaction with foreign colleagues. Such a schism is not a unique national characteristic; it is typical of every country with a developed psychology. What is specific to us is that the Russian psychological tradition, thanks to its psychotechnical background, a “developmental prototype” has a chance to prevent a total split and to create at least “experimental models” of systems that implement Vygotsky’s principle of the philosophy of practice and reveal not only the practical potential of general psychological theory but, most important, the theoretical, general psychological potential of psychological practice.

Psychology can count on healing itself only if it succeeds in creating forms of professional action and thought that are able to grasp a human being in his wholeness, as a whole person. In what contexts is a concrete human wholeness constituted, where it is not reduced to an organ, function, organism, mechanism, social atom, or role? The threefold formula of the context that defines the human wholeness is “consciousness—practice—culture.”

A nonreductive study of this whole is impossible within the framework of the “philosophy of gnoseologism,” but demands a “philosophy of practice,” in accordance with which the researcher takes a participatory position in existence by turning his practical activity vis-à-vis the Other into the subject matter and method of cognition. As for psychology, the “philosophy of practice” is the methodology of psychotechnics (Vygotsky, 1982), in which the subject matter of study is not the psyche, not consciousness, but *work with consciousness*. For example, P.Ia. Galperin’s concept of the stage-by-stage formation of mental actions (1985), which is essentially a psychotechnical concept, is not a theory of thinking, not

a theory of mental actions, but a theory of the *formation* of mental actions, that is, in more general terms, not a theory of the psyche as a natural object but a theory of work with the psyche.

A methodological analysis of the development of the idea of “psychotechnics” shows that its original form already, which was conceived by H. Münsterberg (1924) as applied psychology, consisted of three structural blocks (subject matter—method—domain of application), which were filled with a link between three categories (consciousness—practice—culture),² that is, precisely those that constitute the human wholeness. Theoretical breakthroughs by outstanding thinkers were required in order for this categorical scheme of a psychotechnical approach to fully manifest itself, to crystallize in the complex historical process of the development of science and to become the paradigm of a new psychology. S. Freud and Vygotsky, based on concrete research material, fundamentally reformed the classical understanding of the categories of consciousness and practice.

In his psychoanalytical theory, Freud elaborated the central block of the overall scheme—the category of practice. He conceived of therapeutic practice as a method of research, and practice itself was construed as mediated by consciousness and culture. As a result, Freud produced the first model of a psychotechnical system. In cultural-historical psychology, Vygotsky developed a theoretical-methodological interpretation of the category of consciousness that included the categories of culture and practice in its internal structure, and, therefore, he was able to create a fundamentally new (psychotechnical) type of psychological experiment. In accordance with this logic the most crucial task that completes the creation of the psychotechnical approach is the formation of the category of culture from a psychotechnical perspective (for more details, see Vasilyuk, 1995c).

The contours of the new psychology, which before our eyes is finishing up the period of its formation, have already been sufficiently clearly defined. The new psychology is transcending three basic oppositions, which gave a framework to the classical psychology, that wished to be formed in the image and likeness of natural sciences: “science–practice,” “explaining–understanding,” and “natural–cultural.” Without giving up the tasks of explanation, it brings the category of consciousness to the fore and thus is becoming phenomenological and dialogic, that is, an *understanding*

psychology that is able to treat the subject matter of study professionally not only as an object but also as a meaningful whole and as a living Thou. Without revoking its cognitive tasks, it is eventually becoming, above all, active and actively changing psychology. It concerns not only its social functioning but also its research methodology. Without discarding its honored natural-science traditions, it is becoming, finally, a full-fledged culturological, *human science* discipline that is able to understand the person in the culture and the culture in the person and to incorporate this understanding into the interaction with him.

Therefore, three main, interconnected approaches stand out in the nascent psychology: the “active” approach corresponds to the category of practice; an understanding approach, to the category of consciousness; and the humanitarian approach, to the category of culture. Consequently, the new psychology is an *understanding*, *active*, and a *humanitarian* psychology.

The history of psychotherapeutic reliances

The most important methodological choice for any psychotechnical system is to determine the basic psychological process on which the primary expectations for the practical method are placed. In particular each psychotherapeutic approach must be ready “to give an account for the hope” (1 Pet. 3:15), that is, indicate the productive process at the pole of the client (patient) that ultimately yields a psychotherapeutic benefit.

Indeed, like the physician who does not believe that the medication itself will cure the patient but it will merely generate a healing process in the organism, and like the educator who believes that not the teacher’s explanations in themselves but the act of understanding in response from the pupil will bring about the assimilation of knowledge, the psychotherapist does not expect his therapeutic interventions in themselves to lead to a solution of the client’s problems. The psychotherapeutic method cannot be thought of as a set of unidirectional stimuli that produce the needed result without and apart from some activity on the patient’s part. On the contrary, the method is aimed precisely at creating conditions to trigger this activity, to stimulate it, support, facilitate, and so forth. The method in this sense does not rely on itself but on some specific activity by the patient. Of course, the psychotherapeutic method

itself depends in large part on what activity, what psychological process on the client's part it relies on. In order to define this process in the structure of the psychotherapeutic approach, it is helpful to introduce a special methodological term—"a psychotherapeutic reliance" (Vasilyuk, 2003b).

Is there a special chosen psychological process that is specific for the method of coexperiencing psychotherapy? To give a mindful and systematic answer to this question rather than making an arbitrary and hasty decision, we need to carry out a methodological analysis of the history of psychotherapeutic reliances.

In the pre-Freudian era, it was hypnosis that was the dominant method in psychotherapy. It was assumed that, as it is in physical medicine, the doctor is the absolute and sole authority himself; with the help of hypnosis the doctor induces healing states in the patient, and the capability of the patient to be sufficiently hypnotizable and suggestible. Of these two mechanisms, the crucial one is *suggestibility*. It is this mechanism that ultimately provides the therapeutic effect.

The role of the patient's own activity, therefore, was not simply minimized, but even the contrary—his passivity was deemed therapeutically valuable. The probability of a favorable result of the treatment was directly proportional to how much passivity patients showed in all of its psychological aspects—obedience on the part of their consciousness ("the doctor knows what I need"), making their behavior submit to the doctor's will and responding with trust to the emotions being suggested ("the doctor said that everything will be fine and I should be happy").

By comparison with this "slavish" image of the patient in classical suggestive psychotherapy, the entire subsequent history of psychotherapy looks like the history of an increasing emancipation of the person and the involvement of the patient's inner resources and activity in the therapeutic process.

In the first version of modern psychotherapy, Freud's psychoanalysis, the main therapeutic reliance has been set upon the process of *becoming aware*. With the help of this process the Ego could come to the place of the Id thereby liberating a person from the dictatorship of blind, unconscious forces. This reliance on the philosophical level may be interpreted as *freedom of consciousness*.

Another alternative to the old suggestive psychotherapy, and simultaneously an alternative to psychoanalysis itself, soon emerged.

J. Moreno's psychodrama saw the healing sources of psychotherapy not in the process of becoming aware but in the emancipation; action, expression, creativity, that is, in what can be better classified under *freedom of the will*. The act of spontaneity became the psychotherapeutic reliance. The psychotherapeutic process should be devoted to the awakening of spontaneity, and then spontaneity will do its job.

During the postwar period of development of psychotherapy, two more theoretical "forces" came onto the historical stage, and the banner of each one displayed its psychotherapeutic reliance—the mechanism of *learning* in behavioral therapy and the process of *experiencing* in humanistic psychotherapy.

From a historical-methodological perspective, behavior therapy (like behaviorism as a whole) developed its thinking and practice in the domain of the category of action (Iaroshevskii, 1974), and in this respect it historically matches up with psychodrama, but only in this one. Behaviorism is a methodological hybrid that combines the simple determinism of classical psychology (what Dmitry Uznadze called the "postulate of directness") and a modern vision of the subject matter of psychology (for the distinction between "classical" and "modern" psychology and behaviorism's place in the transition from classical to modern psychology, see Vasilyuk [1986], "On the Problem of the Unity of General Psychology [K problem edinstva obshchei psikhologii]"). The primitive methodology and anthropology of behaviorism predetermined the fact that behavior therapy in a number of ways resembles the old, suggestive psychotherapy. Indeed, the patient's correct adaptive responses that are the objective of behavioral therapy are not generated by the freedom and development of the person himself; the content and the form of these responses are introduced from outside, by the therapist, and are implanted by means of "reinforcements" in the patient's behavior. The mechanism of this implantation is the learning process; through learning, the patient progresses from maladaptive to adaptive behavior. Learning, therefore, is the main reliance of behavioral psychotherapy.

The newer psychotherapy that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century was marked by another radical shift in psychotherapeutic reliances—a shift to the processes of the patient's experiencing. This is the point shared by all schools of psychotherapy that are usually associated with humanistic

orientation. Although experiencing is interpreted differently in each school of humanistic psychotherapy, it is possible to identify a number of important features of this concept that are common to most of them thus making it a kind of meta-school category. They are: its *holistic quality* (the process of experiencing encompasses the whole person—intellect, emotions, body reactions); its *subjectivity* (experiencing is a reality that certifies itself); its *organicity* (the incompleteness and involuntary nature of experiencing and, hence, its recognized ability to produce genuine, *authentic experience*).³

Coexperiencing psychotherapy also chooses the process of experiencing as its basic psychotherapeutic reliance. Coexperiencing psychotherapy thereby follows the existential-humanistic pathway, regarding the two schools along these lines as its source—the person-centered therapy of Carl Rogers and logotherapy of Viktor Frankl. Coexperiencing psychotherapy, however, does not simply borrow the existing category of experiencing. It makes its own contribution to the understanding of that category by elaborating the idea of the productivity of the process of experiencing. The process of experiencing is not reduced to undergoing various mental states; over and above, it is producing internal psychological transformations. Experiencing here is viewed as a special internal activity of the personality that is aimed at enriching the meaning of being.

In order to more precisely determine the geographical coordinates of coexperiencing psychotherapy on the map of modern psychology, it is important to note that the category of experiencing (as it is understood in coexperiencing psychotherapy) has been elaborated as an advancement of a certain school of psychological thought—that of Vygotsky and Leontiev. Therefore coexperiencing psychotherapy, and especially its psychological core—the theory of experiencing—is localized in the point where the Russian psychological tradition meets the existential-humanistic line of development of psychology and psychotherapy.

* * *

What is the significance of the concepts and ideas presented in this part of the article for constructing the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy?

The three sections of this part have sketched the dynamic pictures of three historical-scientific contexts:

- the current situation in Russian psychology;
- the historical nodes in the development of psychotechnical methodology in world psychology; and
- the history of the succession of categorical milestones in psychotherapy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The task of these sections is not to describe the factual history of psychology and psychotherapy but to elicit the logic of history, to listen for the evolving implicit plot that gives meaning and direction to the subsequent acts of the development of psychology.

In these contexts it is possible to hear the following calls and missions. First, the pressing importance for Russian psychology to create psychotechnical systems that meet the parameters described in the section “From psychological practice to psychotechnical theory.”

Second, it is clear from the section on the history of psychotherapeutic reliances that the construction of a psychotherapeutic theory around the category of experiencing is consistent with the present-day trends of world psychotherapy.

Third, the determination of the nodal categories of psychotechnical methodology (Consciousness—Practice—Culture) sets specific tasks for our study:

- in accordance with the category of consciousness—the development of general psychological concepts of consciousness that could be directly incorporated into the theory and practice of psychotherapy (this task will be addressed below);
- for the category of practice—the design of a specific psychotherapeutic technique that implements the theory of consciousness and experiencing and provides new impetus for the development of this theory (addressed below);
- for the category of culture, the task of designing culture-specific models of psychotherapy is formulate—a task that goes beyond the scope of this article but is the most promising for the development of psychotherapy. The author has published preparatory material for theoretical progress in this direction in certain works (Vasilyuk, 1996b, 1997b, 2005).

The general psychological foundations of the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy

The keynote of the psychotechnical methodology, according to Vygotsky, is to make psychological practice not only “pragmatically helpful” but also theoretically fruitful. The practical method must yield a research “profit.” But not all practice can be a tool of scientific research; to acquire this ability, theoretical, general psychological investments should be made into it. More profoundly, the practical method must be born from theory (or at least adopted by it), so that in its technological development and empirical implementation it “does not forget its kinship” with science and in its very structure it carries a need and ability to gain knowledge, which is inherited from the mother theory.

With regard to the task of constructing coexperiencing psychotherapy, this means that in the “cultural-activity” psychology of Vygotsky and Leontiev it is necessary to identify and develop a series of theoretical ideas that in their relationship with psychotherapy as practice can perform the following two functions.

First, ideas and particular theories should be interested in psychotherapy as a unique research method of mining highly abundant deposits of factual knowledge and themselves become capacious, flexible, and open enough to accept and theoretically assimilate all of these empirical resources. For example, there will be discussion later about the psychology of experiencing as one of these particular theories, one of the bricks in the general psychological foundation of coexperiencing psychotherapy. If the theory of experiencing only had research objectives without thinking at all about applied goals, then even in this case it would look to psychotherapy as research methods, because it is hard to find better conditions and material for empirical study of the work of experiencing and the work of a person’s coping with critical situations than what psychotherapy offers.

Second, these theoretical ideas, concepts, and schemes that are invested in the psychotechnical system must serve as a general psychological base for constructing a concrete psychotherapeutic theory of a specific “engineering” type, that in turn becomes the basis for concrete technological developments of psychotherapeutic methods.

Therefore, the task of this chapter is to describe general psychological schemes and specific theories being developed along the lines of cultural-activity psychology that form the general psychological framework of coexperiencing psychotherapy as a psychotechnical system.

On the problem of the unity of general psychological theory

What is the general psychological foundation on which coexperiencing psychotherapy is built? If it claims the methodological status of a psychotechnical system, this means, in part, that it takes on general psychological research obligations. Due to this, it is important to determine exactly which general psychology this system is prepared for and able to serve. But the situation, of course, is not such that one can look around and find a ready-made general psychology that is suitable for this purpose. There must be active involvement in creating it.

The first step on the path to the required general psychology is the attempt described in this section in making a methodological synthesis of the most representative general psychological theories that have developed in the Russian psychological tradition. These include Leontiev's activity theory, Miasishchev's (2004) theory of relations, and Uznadze's theory of set. The methodological analysis reveals (Vasilyuk, 1986) that each of them elaborating the postulates of classical psychology considered the psyche in the frame of the ontological picture "a person's life in the world." In choosing the basic "unit of analysis" and forming the central category, each theory accentuated their own single aspect of this whole ontology. The theories and categories of activity, relations and set, despite the fact that they often were opposed to one another, together form a single general psychological system. The system that unifies these three categories immediately reveals its own incompleteness, which, as a kind of "logical need," requires one more category to fill out the whole and complete the synthesis—the category of communication. The typology of this system is presented in Table 2.

This scheme shows not only the historical and logical unity of the versions of general psychology that have been developed in the Russian psychological tradition but also the fact, which is

Table 2

A Categorical Typology of the Psychological Units of Human Life

A PERSON'S LIFE IN THE WORLD	A PERSON'S LIFE	
	Person (as a dynamic structure)	Life (as an ongoing process)
THE WORLD	1. Set	2. Activity
	3. Relation	4. Communication

usually obscured but is extremely important, that the “ontology of human life” was the philosophical basis of the most productive schools of Russian psychology. The credit for the philosophical-methodological formulation of this ontology with respect to the tasks of psychology belongs to S.L. Rubinstein (Rubinshtein, 1976; see Vasilyuk, 1986, 2003a).

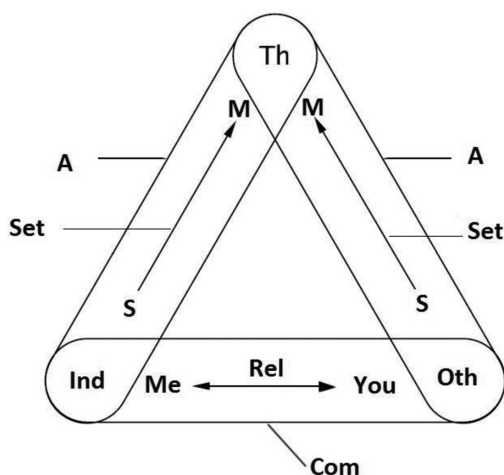
The above methodological synthesis makes it possible to present a model of a “holistic psychological unit of analysis of a person’s life-world” in the form of the structure (presented in Figure 1), whose elements are the primary primary categories (Activity, Set, Relation, and Communication) that have been developed in the Russian psychological tradition.

This model is of fundamental value for coexperiencing psychotherapy. First, anthropological value—coexperiencing psychotherapy describes the person not through the prism of the categories of “illness,” “character structure,” “behavior,” and so on, but as a *unique life-world*, which is analyzed by using the system of concepts presented in the figure. Second, this model acts as a general psychological basis for describing the structure of the therapeutic situation.

The psychology of experiencing

The “psychology of experiencing” developed by the author (Vasilyuk, 1984, 1991a, 2005) acts as the central station through which the logical routes run “in all directions,” connecting the main “population centers”—the important themes of the psychotechnical system

Figure 1. A Model of a “Holistic Psychological Unit of Analysis of a Person’s Life-World”



Notes: One of the vertexes of the triangle symbolizes the individual (Ind); the second, a thing (Th); the third, another individual (Oth). Each individual and thing are connected by activity (A) (on the scheme, the ovals that surround the base angle and the vertex of the triangle), in the context of which the individual performs as the subject (S), and the thing as a matter of activity (M) or an object (O). The vector within the body of activity, directed from the subject to the matter, symbolizes the set (Set). Two individuals are connected by communication (Com), in the context of which they relate to each other You and Me. The vectors between Me and You represent their relations (Rel).

of coexperiencing psychotherapy. The psychology of experiencing includes the following key elements:

- A. *The category of experiencing as activity.* The experiencing is understood and defined as a specific activity, inner work, oriented to coping with critical situations as a result of processes of searching for and generating meaning (Vasilyuk, 1984, 2005) As was mentioned earlier, the process of experiencing is the main psychotherapeutic reliance of coexperiencing psychotherapy.
- B. *The typology of critical situation.* Methodological analysis of these terms enabled it to include them in one whole conceptual system as typological varieties of the general category of “critical situation” (Vasilyuk, 1981, 1984, 1995b). Table 3 shows the conceptual differences within the system.

Table 3

A Typology of Critical Situations

Type of critical situation	Ontological field	Type of activity	Internal necessity	Normal conditions
Stress	"Vitality"	Life of the organism	Here-and-now satisfaction	Directly given life benefits
Frustration	A particular life relation	Action	Actualization of motive	Difficulty
Conflict	The internal world	Consciousness	Internal consonance	Complexity
Crisis	Life as a whole	Will	Actualization of life-intent	Difficulty and complexity

Table 4

A Typology of Life-Worlds

INTERNAL WORLD	LIFE-WORLD	EXTERNAL WORLD	
		Easy	Difficult
		Infantile world 1 2 3 4	Realistic world Value world Creative world

- C. *A typology of life-worlds.* The conceptual framework of the psychological theory of activity theory (Leontiev, 1975) is supplemented with the category of life-world (Vasilyuk, 1984, 1995a). Then, using the method of categorical-typological analysis (Genisaretskii, 2002), Table 4 presents a construction of the typology of life-worlds.
- D. *A typology of regularities of experiencing.* Based on the preceding typology, four types of experiencing, all subject to different regularities, are defined—infantile experiencing, realistic, value-based, and creative.
- E. *Correlation between the typologies of life-worlds and critical situations.* A correlation between these typologies offers important corollaries for the theory and practice of psychotherapy that describe critical situations in each life-world. In the infantile life-world stress coincides phenomenologically with a crisis, since the infant has no means of coping with stress and any local pain or dissatisfaction grows into a total catastrophe. In the realistic life-world, stress appears as a separate category, while frustration here coincides with a crisis: the only life relation, because of the internal simplicity of this life-world, constitutes “all of life,” so an inability to realize this life relation (frustration) is a total disaster for one’s entire life (a crisis). In the value-based life-world there appears a specific type of stress that is engendered by the complexity rather than the difficulty of the world; frustrations are absent here, and any conflict coincides phenomenologically with a crisis. In the creative life-world there is a complete difference between all types of critical situations.

These theoretical premises help to formulate the idea that experiencing may be mediated by a transition of a person’s life-world from one state to another. Such a transition in itself, and not merely the content- and meaning-oriented processing of a critical situation, changes its status (e.g., what seemed to be a crisis turns out to be *only* stress) and engages additional resources in the work of experiencing. This conclusion is very important for developing concepts regarding the tactics of coexperiencing psychotherapy: efforts may frequently be aimed not so much at working through the actual critical situation in which a patient has found himself as at helping him to attain the new dimension of a “higher” life-world, where the situation will be resolved by the forces of that world.

- F. *Correlation between the types of critical situations and types of experiencing.* A comparative analysis of types of experiencing of various critical situations leads to a fundamental theoretical formulation of the problem of the “success” of experiencing, which is extremely important for the tactical tasks of finding an optimal proportion between symptom- and personality-oriented approaches during work with a specific psychotherapeutic case.
- G. *The concept of cultural mediation of experiencing.* Historically cumulative experiencings with standard situations crystallize in various symbolic forms; when a person experiences crisis, his consciousness might get connected to these symbolic forms, and so the process of experiencing, without losing its personality-oriented uniqueness, gains additional depth and productivity (Florenskii, 1977; Vygodskii, 1916).

This entire body of conceptualizations regarding experiencing creates a general psychological platform for the development of the key elements of the theory, technique, and didactics of coexperiencing psychotherapy.

The stratigraphy and structure of consciousness

The theory of experiencing set forth in the preceding section provides conceptual tools that are enough for describing the paradigmatic aspects of the processes of experiencing, but the task of describing the syntagmatic aspects of these processes (which counseling practice cannot do without) requires additional, specialized inquiries in the area of the psychological theory of consciousness. These developments pertain to two dimensions of the problem of consciousness—the dimensions of stratigraphy and structure.

By the *stratigraphy of consciousness*, we mean theoretical models that analyze the composition of layers of consciousness, the specific features of the functioning of consciousness in each layer and the interaction among the processes of consciousness belonging to its various layers.

By the *structural* aspect of the problem in this case, we mean the identification of the smallest molecular unit of consciousness that retains the main properties of the whole consciousness and an analysis of its structure. We regard the mental image as such a molecule.

Table 5

A Typology of the Levels of the Functional Regimes of Consciousness

CONSCIOUSNESS	THE OBSERVED	
	Subject	Object
THE OBSERVER	Subject	Reflection (R)
		Apprehension (A)
		1 2
		3 4
	Object	Experience (E)
		The unconscious (U)

Stratigraphy: The levels of functioning of consciousness

The first step of the stratigraphic analysis of consciousness is to introduce the concept of four levels, on each of which consciousness functions in a particular way, in a particular mode. They are the levels of reflection, apprehension, experience, and the unconscious (Vasilyuk, 1988). These levels are defined by constructing the typology presented in Table 5.

The typology derives from an initial differentiation in any phenomenon of consciousness between two figures—the Observer and the Observed. Each of them may be in an active, subject state or a passive, object one. Voluntary psychic processes, such as remembering, perception, thinking, and so on, where the Observer is active and the Observed is passive, relate to the level of Apprehension (A). The level Experience (E) is most obviously revealed in daydreams, emotional states, and feelings, but it is present in all psychic processes, including thinking (e.g., “a thought suddenly came to mind”—a phenomenon described this way records the activity of the Observed while the Observer is passive). Phenomena of an active relation to one’s own psychic activity represent the level of *reflection* (R). And finally, mental processes that cannot be investigated by internal observation (the Observer and the Observed are phenomenologically passive) belong to the level of Unconscious (U).

The work of experiencing, like any human activity, is mediated by consciousness—and by the entire system of consciousness as a

whole, which includes the aforementioned four levels of functioning. These concepts helped to advance the hypothesis of the multilevel structure of experiencing by analogy with N.A. Bernstein's theory (Bernshtein, 1947) of the multilevel structure of movement. The process of experiencing may be described as taking place along four interconnected channels. At each moment it is possible to identify the dominant level of experiencing.

The instances in which the level of the unconscious is the guiding one in the work of experiencing are well known not only to psychotherapeutic thought but also to artistic thought (e.g., I. Bunin calls "the secret work of the soul"). The internal work of coping with a critical situation for the most part flows on the level of immediate experience. In this case, it represents itself through feelings and emotions, "nagging memories," an associative spinning of thoughts around painful topics, and so on. At that time, a person may be engaged in some ordinary purposeful work, and in the midst of all of these feelings and associations he suddenly recalls the problem that bothers him, and he starts to consciously look for ways to solve it. At this moment, the work of experiencing changes its dominant level from the regime of immediate experience to the regime of apprehension. When the attempts at making the work of experiencing in a critical situation are on the level of apprehension (to find a substitute for the lost object, for example, or to make a choice by "weighing" alternatives) suffer a setback, reflection may become the dominant level of the process. Here the subject becomes aware of his activity of experiencing *per se* and reflectively reinterprets its conditions, his norms and values, positions and goals. This creates an opportunity for a creative reorientation of course direction and mode of experiencing.

Stratigraphy: The register of consciousness

This four-level model of the stratigraphy of consciousness makes it possible to describe the empirical processes of experiencing fairly precisely. The use of the model, however, periodically leads to paradoxes.

For example, as a patient reported on his life situation, he twice experienced strong, vivid emotions. If one tried to code all the phenomena of consciousness that are revealed by this account by recording the "melody" on something like a musical staff, both emotions would have to be placed on the same line of the level of direct experiencing (IE), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. A Recording of a “Melody” of Experiencing on the Four-Level Model



If, however, emotion E1 reproduces an old, enduring feeling, which overcomes the patient with nearly the same power as soon as his memory immerses him in the old situation, and emotion E2 expresses his attitude today toward the old feeling (say, he is now ashamed that he was terrified at the time), then placing them next to each other, so to speak, separated by a comma, on the same IE level looks unnatural. There is no question that both “ashamed” and “terrified” belong to the IE level, but they also belong to different worlds that are clearly in different categories, clearly not equivalent hierarchically, even if they were of the same intensity. In order to separate them from each other, we will have to make the surprising assumption that the stratigraphic system of consciousness has not one but several levels of direct experiencing. Or, to generalize, we can say that in the unfolding process of experiencing the same level of consciousness is represented multiple times, and the phenomena of this level may be actualized simultaneously and may interact with each other.

In order to resolve such paradoxes, we propose to introduce the concept of *registers of consciousness*. Each register of consciousness consists of the totality of the levels of consciousness described above (just as each musical octave consists of the same totality of scale degrees). In the course of the process of experiencing, transitions take place from one register to another, and a relationship and interaction occur between various acts of consciousness that belong to different registers. Psychotherapeutic experience makes it possible to describe various types of transitions between registers (Vasilyuk, 2008).

The reality that in structural-stratigraphic terms appears as a register of consciousness, in phenomenological terms, is a specific life-world, and hence has its own space, time, subject, concrete content, language, atmosphere, and myth. In accordance with a multiplicity of registers of consciousness there is the multiplicity

of life-worlds in which a person and his consciousness exist phenomenologically. When an elderly person recalls his childhood and in his mental picture the cloud, castle, lake, and ripples run across the water and reach the edge of the cloud that is reflected in the lake, then his consciousness is in this kind of space and is led by the rhythms of this kind of a time that is not at all the same as the time and space of his current life situation and, since it possesses a phenomenological reality, is a special life-world that differs from the life-worlds of his adult life.

An analysis of empirical cases shows that to execute the actual process of experiencing a person uses fairly complex hierarchical designs, consisting of multiple registers. The registers may be mutually subordinated to each other, forming nesting-doll-like series, when some element of one register “blossoms” into a separate life-world, which in turn generates new worlds. Certain neighboring registers of consciousness, however, may not have a hierarchical relationship with each other but be in an equal position, identically subordinate to a higher register (e.g., two different, detailed illustrations of the same idea). In order to describe them, the concept of *horizon of consciousness* is introduced. A horizon of consciousness is therefore the “geometric place” of registers of consciousness that are equidistant from the same hierarchically higher register.

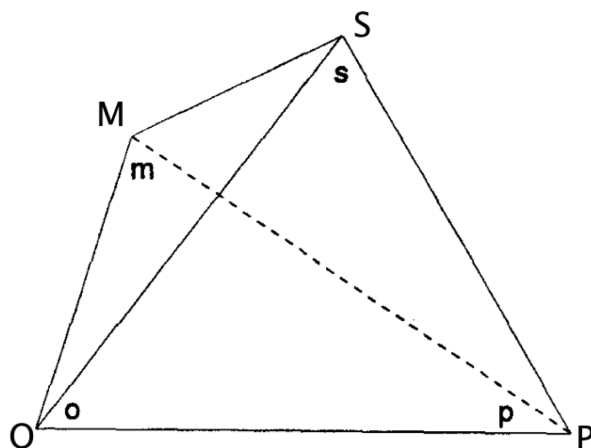
Thus, the stratigraphic model of consciousness includes the following key concepts: level (or functional mode) of consciousness, register of consciousness, type of transitions between registers, and horizon of consciousness (Vasilyuk, 2008).

The structure of mental image

In the course of developing the ideas of Alexei Leontiev on the “formative elements of consciousness,” a new structural model of consciousness has been proposed (Vasilyuk, 1993, 1995d). This model starts from a simple question: what, generally speaking, determines a person’s consciousness? The obvious answer is: the external world, the inner world of the person, the culture he/she belongs to, and, finally, his/her language.

In this model, a basic structural unit (molecule) of consciousness is a mental image. In any such molecule, each of the abovementioned determinants of consciousness has its own representative.

Figure 3. A Psychosemiotic Tetrahedron—Model for the Structure of Images in Consciousness



Notes: O—the object content of an image; o—sensory fabric of the object content; P—personal sense; p—the sensory fabric of personal sense (emotion); M—meaning; m—sensory fabric of meaning; S—sign (word); s—sensory fabric of a sign (word).

The external world is represented by an objective content, the world of culture is represented by meaning, and the language—by a word (or sign), the inner world—by a personal sense. These representatives can be thought of as nodal points of the image. Each of these nodes is essentially bilateral, one side facing toward objectively existing reality (the external world, the inner world, language, and culture), and the other side directed toward immediate subjectivity. This picture can be visualized as a figure that came to be known as the “psychosemiotic tetrahedron” (Figure 3).

The vertices of the tetrahedron can be thought of as magnetic poles of the image. In any given moment, the inner dynamics of the image (moving inside the tetrahedron) can get closer to one of the poles. As a result, one of the aspects of the image can start to dominate, resulting in a specific image type.

The main theoretical innovation of this model of the image is the modification of the concept of “sensory fabric.” Alexei Leontiev (1975) and Alexander Logvinenko (1974), who introduced this concept, associated the sensory fabric only with the object content

of the image. Our analysis has revealed that other poles of the image—meaning, personal sense, and sign—also have their own sensory fabrics. As a result, the sensory fabric received a different place in the model of consciousness. Previously, it had been part of the series “meaning—personal sense—sensory fabric” (Leontiev, 1975). In the new model, it was given a different role as a special “constituent” of an image.

The sensory fabric, as a kind of dynamic plasma, lives and moves in the space of an image defined by its “magnetic” poles. The properties of this plasma change near each pole, taking the specific character of that particular dimension of the image. For instance both impressionist and expressionist paintings represent primarily the sensory fabric of the image. But in the former case, it is the “impression,” the sensory fabric of the object content, while in the latter it is the “emotion,” the sensory fabric of the personal sense.

Nevertheless, despite the vastly different properties of the plasma in the neighborhood of the poles, it remains a single substance. The principal conclusion of this new model of consciousness (and its molecules, mental images) is that, just as a meaning is a unit of the world of culture, a word is a unit of the world of language, and so forth, the sensory fabric serves as a unit of the person’s body, that is, as a representative of the world of the body in the mental image.

Thus, we have described a structural-stratigraphic model of consciousness. The productivity of this model is confirmed first in psychotherapeutic theory, where it has helped to develop the idea of “psychotechnical units”; second, in terms of psychotherapeutic technique, where it has made it possible to design methods for psychotherapeutic work with altered states of consciousness; and, finally, in general psychological terms, where it is used to produce fairly precise descriptions of empirical states and processes of consciousness (e.g., the experiencing of grief (Vasilyuk, 1991b); the “culture of the image” and its specific ethnocultural features (Sidorova, 2005); and the pathology of the image in mental disorders (Ziabkina, 1993).

* * *

Let us also sum up the results of the entire second section that are essential for further inquiry. They are:

1. a general psychological groundwork for the ontology of a life-world, which serves as an ontological basis of the system of coexperiencing psychotherapy;
2. development of the category of experiencing, which is the basic “productive process” in the system of coexperiencing psychotherapy;
3. development of the category of the critical situation as the basic idea for describing a client’s problems in the system of coexperiencing psychotherapy;
4. development of a model of the structure and stratigraphy of consciousness, which is essential for creating the technique of coexperiencing psychotherapy.

Psychotherapeutic theory

The specific nature of psychotherapy from the perspective of the theory of experiencing

What is psychotherapy? Without a conscious answer to this naive question, an expert cannot solve a single vitally important professional problem, whether it is the problem of the boundaries of professional competence and the zone of responsibility, the problem of defining the goals and assessing the results of psychotherapy, or the problem of professional identity. Yet the effort to produce a general definition of psychotherapy has always ended in failure (see Tsapkin, 1992). The reason for this logical impasse is that the formulation of the question is naturalistic and therefore inadequate. Psychotherapy, after all, is not a natural given that is defined in itself, and therefore able to be clearly defined from outside. A definition of psychotherapy, among other things, represents a personal choice of a position. Any professional who acts consciously must assume the risk and responsibility for defining psychotherapy, because this definition is closely associated with the psychotherapist’s general philosophical positions and theoretical views, and with personal intuitions and axiological choices.

Hence, the task of formulating a general definition of psychotherapy may be replaced by the metatask of identifying the specific parameters of psychotherapy: rather than a general answer to the question, “What is psychotherapy?” it is worth looking for a general

system of questions that each “psychotherapy” should answer if it claims to be a specific psychotherapeutic approach or school. The distinctive features of a certain psychotherapeutic approach may be described with the aid of two systems of juxtapositions and oppositions: first, in comparison with the social-anthropological practices that are present in the culture (medicine, pedagogy, religion, law, social work, etc.) and second, in comparison with other existing psychotherapeutic approaches and schools (psychoanalysis, behavioral therapy, psychodrama, gestalt therapy, etc.).

In order to define the specific nature of coexperiencing psychotherapy, in this article we will compare it with just one anthropological practice—medicine and with just one psychotherapeutic approach—behavioral therapy.

The first question of this comparative study involves the *supreme values and goals* of these practices. Unlike medicine, prime objective of which is health, and unlike behavioral therapy, which is aimed overall at *adaptation*, coexperiencing psychotherapy, in accordance with the basic theory of experiencing, sees its supreme goal in the patient’s attainment of meaningfulness.

Of all the dimensions of the human being as its subject matter, medicine points out the reality of a body, it conceptualizes a person in terms of an organism. For behavioral therapy as such subject matter, through the prism of which it sees a person, behavior stands out. Coexperiencing therapy sees a person as a unique life-world.

A doctor knows that the success of his practice depends not only on drugs and medical procedures but also on the productive processes of body response, whether it is a process of neogenesis, compensation, healing, or recruitment of functions.

The behavioral therapist, who helps a patient to achieve adaptation, is a process of learning, which consists of the formation or extinction of new conditioned reflexes. Coexperiencing therapy expects a person to have an active productive experiencing, which is seen as a process of meaning generation.

Each anthropological practice has its own idea of “evil” and its own model of the problematic state of a human being, which it treats accordingly. For medicine it is the concept of disease, for behavioral therapy—the concept of *maladjustment*. Coexperiencing psychotherapy aims at helping a person to cope with *critical life situations*.

In each humanitarian practice, a specific *professional* activity is described and its *methods* are developed. For example,

a person can get rid of a disease as a result of physical training or a shamanistic ritual. However, neither physical training nor shamanistic ritual could be considered a *treatment* in the strict sense of a medical practice that is performed through the use of special methods (allopathic, homeopathic, acupunctural, etc.). The main principle of the behavioral therapist is *reeducation* and the main method is the *method of reinforcement*. Specific activity that the coexperiencing psychotherapist performs may be called *coexperiencing* and the general method of this activity—the *method of understanding*.

The key concepts that specify coexperiencing psychotherapy are as follows: meaning–life–world–critical situation–coexperiencing–understanding. All of these categories are determined within the entire system. For example, coexperiencing is conceptualized here not only as an emotional response to the patient's feeling but as a therapist's inner work that is aimed at assisting the patient's work of experiencing. The general method of coexperiencing is an integral, multilevel understanding of the client's processes of experiencing. That is precisely why this psychotechnical system is called "understanding psychotherapy" in the Russian version and "coexperiencing therapy" in English. It is so-called following the tradition of naming psychotechnical systems not according to the subject matter, but to the professional activity (e.g., Freud's theory was not called "psychology of the unconscious," but psychoanalysis, because analysis is a psychotherapist's activity method. Galperin's psychotechnical theory (1992) is not called "theory of thinking," but the "theory of planned stage-by-stage formation of mental actions," the key to this self-designation is a formation that also defines the psychologist's activity).

For illustration purposes we sum up the key characteristics of coexperiencing psychotherapy, comparing it to medicine as one of the anthropological practices and to behavioral therapy as one of the psychotherapeutic approaches.

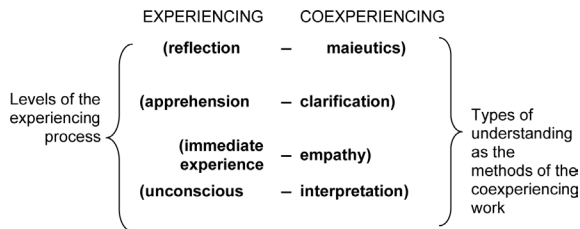
The result of this study is not only in the answers to the questions, characterizing specific features of coexperiencing psychotherapy, but also in the questions and categories by themselves (in Table 6 they are the column titles) are results of the study and characterize the meta-structure of psychotherapy. This meta-structure allows us to conduct research in the field of psychotherapeutic comparative-istics (cf. Sosland, 1999; Tsapkin, 2004).

Table 6

Key Characteristics of Coexperienting Psychotherapy

Anthropological practice	Goal and value	Subject matter	Problematic state	Productive process	Principle of therapist's activity	Method
Medicine	Health	Body	Disease	Recruitment of functions and compensation	Treatment	Allopathic, homeopathic, and so on
Behavioral therapy	Adaptation	Behavior	Maladjustment behavior	Learning (formation of new conditioned or operant reflexes)	Reeducation	Reinforcement
Coexperienting psychotherapy	Meaning	Life-world	Critical situation	Experienting	Coexperienting	Understanding

Figure 4. **Basic Psychotechnical Units of Coexperiencing Psychotherapy**



The levels of experiencing and basic psychotechnical units

Psychotechnical theory is a theory of a practice rather than an object; it describes not the psyche but rather work with the psyche. Therefore, the units of analysis of this theory must include simultaneously elements representing the object and elements representing the method of work with the object. The psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy is based on the theory of experiencing and posits the process of experiencing as its main reliance, that is, as the main productive process that provides the effect of psychotherapy. Therefore, the units of analysis in coexperiencing psychotherapy must include two elements: the first one describes a certain aspect of a *client's experiencing* process, and the second one describes a corresponding act of the *therapist's coexperiencing* (according to the general outline of the system of coexperiencing psychotherapy in Table 6). In the context of a psychotechnical system it is more precise to speak of *psychotechnical units* rather than “units of analysis.” Psychotechnical units must be, on the one hand, scientifically analytical units that define various essential elements of the holistic process of experiencing, and on the other hand, practical procedural units that make it possible to affect these aspects in a differentiated and controlled manner.

A framework of levels or modes of the functioning of consciousness that distinguishes in the system of consciousness among reflection, apprehension, experience, and the unconscious has been chosen as a basic scheme to differentiate the process

of experiencing. For each of these levels we can find a specific, corresponding psychotherapeutic method. Hence, we can allocate four basic psychotechnical units of coexperiencing psychotherapy: “reflection–maieutics,” “apprehension–clarification,” “immediate experience–empathy,” and “unconscious–interpretation” (see Figure 4) (Vasilyuk, 1988).

In the case of each of four basic psychotechnical units the “left” pole is one of the levels of doing the work of experiencing, and the “right” pole is one of the types of psychotherapeutic understanding and, correspondingly, one of the methods of doing the work of coexperiencing. In the psychotherapeutic context, each of these units constitutes an indissoluble unity, whose elements do not exist by themselves. For example, the unconscious cannot become a reality of psychotherapy without interpretation; similarly, the client’s experience cannot have the status of a real event within psychotherapy without an empathic response from the therapist (by analogy with the fact that a radio receiver is required for a radio wave to turn into a sonic signal). Various psychotherapy schools recognize various of the aforementioned units as the guiding level for designing their therapeutic method. For instance, psychoanalysis regards the unconscious as the guiding level of the system of consciousness for psychotherapy and interpretation as the main procedural principle; client-centered therapy chooses direct experiencing as the guiding level and, accordingly, considers empathy the main procedural principle.

Table 7 presents a comparison of psychotechnical units.

In coexperiencing psychotherapy, the use of the whole scale of basic psychotechnical units enables the psychotherapist to selectively fall into resonance with various layers of the entire process of the client’s experiencing and, by carefully listening to its rhythms and tendencies, harmonize the work of experiencing, helping it to play out in the most concentrated and complete form (Vasilyuk, 1998).

The chronotope of the psychotherapy

The task of systematic description of psychotherapy as an empirical reality may be presented as a task of describing the chronotope of psychotherapy. It consists of two interrelated parts—space and time characterization. The subject matter of spatial synchronic analyzing of therapy is the of the psychotherapeutic situation, whereas the subject matter of diachronic analyzing therapy is an

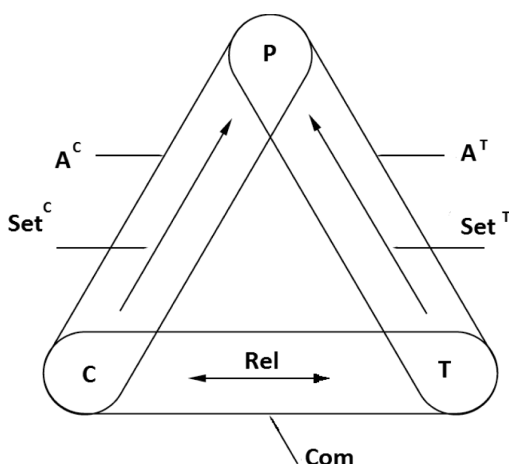
Table 7

Comparative Characteristics of Psychotechnical Units

PARAMETERS OF COMPARISON	PSYCHOTECHNICAL UNITS			
	The unconscious—Interpretation	Immediate experience —Empathy	Apprehension—Clarification	Reflection—Maieutics
Direct subject matter of psychotechnical attention and action	Gaps in understanding	Current experience	Inadequacy of subjective image of a situation	Internal misalignments in self-awareness
Attitude toward subjectivity of client	Distrust and analysis	Trust and acceptance	Assumption and correction	Dialectical
Context of understanding client's consciousness and behavior	Unconscious dynamic forces	Internal aspect of life-world	External aspect of life-world	Self-awareness
Process that makes the decisive transformations of consciousness	Becoming-aware	Immediate experience	Cognition	Self-cognition
Leading mode of psychotechnical interaction	Psychologist's monologue	Client's monologue	Dialogue* between psychologist and client	Client's internal dialogue
Psychologist's role	"Omniscient expert"	"Empathic mirror"	"Methodologist of reasonableness"	"Dialectician"

*In the current context, the term "dialogue" is used not in M.M. Bakhtin's meaning, but establishes a specific (i.e., for cognitive therapy); open opposition between the psychologist's position and the inadequate convictions of the client.

Figure 5. Structure of the Psychotherapeutic Situation



Notes: C—client; T—psychotherapist; P—problem; A^C —client's activity in regard to the problem; Set^C —client's set and relation to the problem; A^T —psychotherapist's activity in regard to the problem; Set^T —therapist's set and relation to the problem; Com—communication between the client and the psychotherapist; Rel—system of relations between the client and therapist.

expanding therapeutic process. The psychotherapeutic situation in the context of coexperiencing psychotherapy is described based on the holistic psychological unit of analysis of a life-world obtained by synthesizing the basic categories that have been developed in the Russian psychological tradition. In graphic form, the scheme of the psychotherapeutic situation is represented in Figure 5.

Rather than showing a natural situation, this scheme presents the system of psychotechnical relations in the psychotherapeutic situation. For example, a “problem” must be regarded not as a natural “thing” that the client “has” before and independently of psychotherapy and that he brings in ready-made form to the psychotherapy session. A problem is a “symbolic object” that is building up during the psychotherapeutic process itself. It is defined simultaneously as a *topic* that is being dialogically agreed upon in communication between the client and the psychotherapist, as a *subject matter* of their joint activity upon that they are agreeing upon, and as an

explanatory model for the client's complaints that they are gaining an agreement upon, and so on.

The psychotechnical point of view on the structure of the psychotherapeutic situation allows this scheme to be used not only for the purpose of analytical description of the session, for example, while preparing for a supervision, but also as a map of structural transformations of the therapeutic situation during the session itself.

The development of the category of psychotherapeutic time is one of the most contemporaneous problems in general psychotherapeutic theory. A whole range of psychotherapeutic time dimensions might be singled out: social time (the periodicity and the duration of sessions, the endurance of the course, etc.), to which Jacques Lacan opposed logical time,⁴ phenomenological time (the variety of "here-and-now" and "there-and-then" combinations, that are used for descriptions of a client's life events in the therapeutic session), processual psychotherapeutic time (the analysis of phase and stage of therapeutic time), and so on.

The semiotics of the psychotherapeutic situation and the psychotechnics of understanding

The category of "understanding" is conceptualized not only as a general method of coexperiencing psychotherapy but also as a strategic dialogic orientation that is opposite to the ideology of "manipulation." In putting this reliance into practice, the therapist does everything to understand the patient and to give him this understanding rather than try to understand in order to do something—influence, cure, or correct. Psychotherapeutic understanding creates an intensified dialogic field that, in accordance with the "silence principle" (Kop'ev, 1992) appeals to the patient's freedom—his freedom of expression, of will, of self-awareness.

Implementation of the method of understanding requires a well-developed and subtly differentiated psychotherapeutic technique. Its systematic development relies on a description of the semiotic relationship that takes shape between the client's "word" and the therapist's "word" in response. The client's "word" itself is not a ready-made, precast mold, but an unfolding process of symbolization of existence, a process that runs through many layers before emerging in a direct speech act. The therapist's "word" must respond to the entire, complex dynamic of these

streams of symbolization, and therefore it must be equipped with psychotherapeutic schemes that allow to differentially reflect among the various aspects of the client's act of expression. With respect to the process of constructing the therapist's response, these schemes perform the function of "multipliers," symbolic prisms of a kind that make the generation of many therapeutic responses possible.

The function of multipliers that determine the construction of a therapeutic phrase is performed by the basic theoretical schemes introduced earlier:

1. the scheme of layers of consciousness;
2. the concept of registers of consciousness;
3. the typology of life-worlds;
4. the structure of the mental image; and
5. the structure of the psychotherapeutic situation.

For example, the use of the multiplier "Typology of life-worlds" consists of attuning therapeutic attention in one case to picking up in the patient's complaints about being tired, feeling powerless, infantile inflections, expectations, motivations, and desires and responding to them (e.g. "You are tired, and sometimes you want so much for someone to say, 'Go rest, tomorrow's a new day, everything will work out'"); in another, picking up in the same client's words realistic, goal-oriented sets and responding to them with a therapeutic comment that goes in tune with the upbeat and purposeful attitude of the realistic life-world ("Although you are tired, this goal is so important to you that you have decided, no matter what, to find the means to accomplish this task"); in the third and fourth cases, a response will be found for the sets of value and creativity that can always be found behind a person's words. This is roughly how all of the basic theoretical ideas are translated into the language of psychotherapeutic technique and the primary technical "matter" of coexperiencing psychotherapy takes form.

In the overall structure of the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy, the concepts of the connection between the semiotics of the psychotherapeutic situation and the psychotechnics of understanding act with the function of a link between psychological and psychotherapeutic theory on the one hand and psychotherapeutic technique on the other (Vasilyuk, 1996a).

The psychotherapeutic technique of understanding psychotherapy

Levels of psychotherapeutic art

In psychotherapy, as in any complex art, a number of hierarchically cosubordinated technical levels can be identified: the level of the device, levels of technique, combination of techniques, of tactics, and of strategy. The level of the *device* in coexperiencing psychotherapy is represented by an “alphabet” of basic psychotherapeutic moves. A “letter” of this alphabet consists of a comment by the therapist in response to a “stimulus” comment by the patient.

The level of the *combination* correlates with the concrete condition of the psychotherapeutic situation and the current task that has arisen in this situation (e.g., the task of clarifying an inquiry, entering into the contract, concluding a session, etc.). The level of *psychotherapeutic method* corresponds to the task of psychotherapeutically working through a concrete problem or specific symptom. Psychotherapeutic technique is psychotherapy in miniature. Method is the central technical level, which embodies the specific tactics and strategy of psychotherapy and at the same time implements the system of devices and combinations. The level of *psychotherapeutic tactics* corresponds to the holistic psychotherapeutic situation that unfolds over time in the course of a series of sessions and is determined above all by the logic of the therapy contract. Finally, the level of *psychotherapeutic strategy* is the doctrinal one; it is based on the philosophical-anthropological approach that the given psychotherapy school follows. Next we discuss three of these levels of psychotherapeutic art, as they are represented in coexperiencing psychotherapy: the level of technique, the level of the combination, and the level of method.

The procedural alphabet of coexperiencing psychotherapy

The alphabet of basic techniques was developed on the basis of the structural levels of experiencing listed above and the psychotechnical units that correspond to these levels. As elements of the “alphabet,” the main psychotechnical units are examined not so much in terms of their psychological mechanisms and general

psychotherapeutic principles as from the technical point of view. Specifically, we will discuss the structure, variations, and functions of each of the four basic psychotherapeutic techniques: empathy, understanding, maieutics, and interpretation.

Empathy

The structure of an emphatic statement comprises two key elements—an operator of understanding and an empathic sign. The *operator of understanding* (i.e., the words “do I understand you correctly?” “have I gotten this right?” etc.) performs different functions toward various figures in the psychotherapeutic situation. With respect to the client, the function of the operator of understanding is to “communicate” to him that he is the principal character in the therapeutic process, who takes on the initiative and responsibility for clarifying and solving the problem. With respect to the therapist the operator of understanding has the important function of self-limitation, which blocks advice, recommendations, the gathering of medical history, and other actions not appropriate to the spirit of coexperiencing psychotherapy. Finally, the effect of the operator of understanding on the therapeutic relationship is based on structuring its roles in such a way that the therapist deliberately occupies the secondary position of empathic listener, while the client assumes the status of author of the narrative (rather than one of the prototypes or characters in his story).

An empathic sign's structure consists of the following elements: *the persona*, *the mode of experience*, *an experienced state*, *the object* that the experience is related to, and the *relation* itself. An empathic sign's structure consists of the following elements: the persona; the mode of experiencing; the state being experienced; the object to which the experiencing is linked; and the link itself. Each of these structural elements may vary in the empathic response, and this is how a change in the whole meaning of the empathic response is achieved. For example, in the empathic response, “Do I understand correctly that you feel resentment toward your friend?” if one changes the persona “you” to the persona “you as a child,” we will get an empathic comment that has a completely different effect on the client's consciousness. The key element of an empathic sign is the experienced state. This element may have indicative, nominative, significative, and expressive functions toward the

client's experiencing that it refers to. The application of the semi-otic relationship to the analysis allows therapeutic statements to be fine-tuned. For example, the word "anger" in an empathic statement may be replaced with a description of a corresponding expression of the body ("Do I understand correctly that you just clench your fists over this lack of fairness?") (Vasilyuk, 2007).

Clarification

The overall task of clarification statements, unlike empathic ones, is to reflect not what the client feels about a situation but the image of the situation itself, as well as his actions toward the situation. The technique of clarification stimulates the use of intellectual, perceptual, all cognitive, and some volitional resources to solve the problem. The structure of a clarification consists of the following elements: an understanding operator, a persona, a mode of action, an action, and the image of the situation. An *understanding sign*, in turn, consists of structural elements such as a persona; a mode of action; an action; and the subject matter and circumstances of the action. "Am I understanding you correctly that [you] are now trying to [dispassionately] analyze] the situation in which your friend made unfair actions toward you?" Usually the key element of an clarification statement is the object being described. Each element of an clarification statement can vary, but the main variations—the variations in the image of the situation—break down into two categories: perceptual and intellectual. An example of perceptual variation would be a change in the descriptions of an object similar to a change in a movie lens from a close-up to a medium shot. An example of intellectual variation would be a change in a description based on the "abstract—concrete" parameter (Vasilyuk, 2010).

Maieutics

Maieutic statements focus the client's attention not on his immediate experience and feelings, not on the objects and situations that he describes, but on his logical bases (prejudices, convictions, premises, persuasion, etc.) that trigger precisely these feelings when the given circumstances occur. The client does not recognize such logical bases, not because they are unconscious but because they are too self-evident to be noticed. A maieutic statement contains the following elements:

the understanding operator / the subject (the holder of the conviction) / the mode of persuasion / the persuasion itself (which comprises: the persona / the modality / experience or action) / the subject matter of experience or action. "Am I understanding you correctly that /you / are absolutely convinced that /your soul/ is simply obligated /to respond/ to any injustice/ with a sense of grudge?" A maieutic statement can change in terms of the parameter of modality and strength, and in addition, all the same elements as in the previous two types of statements can vary. The function of maieutics is to stimulate the process of reflection. A client's response to a maieutic statement may be an agreement with the formulated assertion, or a rejection of it, or a specification of it, but in any case this will require the client to activate a reflective attitude toward the "premises" of his thoughts, actions, experiencings (Vasilyuk, 2008).

Interpretation

In the context of coexperiencing psychotherapy the method of interpretation is seldom used at the level of the technical alphabet, but this does not mean that there is no room at all for interpretation in this approach. It comes into play when the work of experiencing during the psychotherapeutic process approaches the internal necessity of explaining the significant life events, which seem to the client himself irrational and unintentional but at the same time nonrandom and related to his intent.

Parameters of variation

In addition to the specific parameters of variation, there are others that are common to all psychotechnical units. The primary one is the register of consciousness, to which a particular statement is addressed. A therapeutic response may appeal to the register "here and now," by reflecting the feelings or thoughts of the patient as the author of the narrative and an active participant in the therapeutic process, or to the register "there and then," by reflecting his thoughts and feelings as a character in his own story that he experienced somewhere "there and then." It is one thing to say, "You were offended when you discovered your friend's unfairness to you," and quite another to say, "You are frustrated that you have taken so long to get over feeling resentment toward your friend."

The described techniques are the basic primary elements of coexperiencing therapy. By joining together into complex combinations, they form the psychotechnical matter of the therapeutic process.

Structuring and tempering

In the counseling process the psychotherapist must promote the development and realization of the patient's productive experiencing. The "psychotechnical units" described above are elementary forms that not only assist the process of experiencing but also provide the therapist with an ability to become oriented in this process.

This is not enough, however. The psychotherapist also needs a supplemental system of reliance—for the dynamically changing therapeutic situation that he and the client have become involved in—and a supplemental system of activity tools. It is necessary not only to understand the situation itself, as well as its dynamic, but also to keep it in an optimal state and eliminate any distortions, disproportions and mismatches that arise in it. This set of tasks is accomplished through devices of psychotherapeutic structuring and tempering, that is, management of therapeutic space and time.

Since we are unable in this article to cover this topic systematically, we will only cite a few typical tasks as examples.

Structuring tasks include the following: (a) the establishment of therapeutic contact; (b) working through the client's complaints; (c) the formulation of an appropriate therapeutic request (the point is *forming*, because the request is not an initial given of the therapeutic process that the client "brings" with him; the request is the subject matter and product of the sometimes highly dramatic, dialogic interaction between therapist and client); (d) the "formatting" of the client's problem (the client's problem can be given a different form during the session, depending on its content, the client's current state and even circumstances that would seem to be extraneous to the problem such as time limitations and the therapist's proficiency with certain methods. For example, if the patient is going through an acute situation of internal conflict but at this stage he is asthenical, there is little time left and the therapist is more proficient in relaxation technique than in procedures for helping to resolve conflicts, the problem may be "formatted" in the form of *stress* rather than *conflict*. In this case, the therapist may emphasize aspects of fatigue and exhaustion in the client's state and

propose conducting a relaxation session in an effort to restore the energy that will be needed for in-depth, internal work at the following session); (e) correcting distortions and skews in the structure of the therapeutic situation, particularly those that interfere with building a productive therapeutic alliance, which in coexperiencing psychotherapy means the client and therapist's joint activity of experiencing—coexperiencing (for instance, the patient may regard his personal problem as a “task” that the psychotherapist should resolve, since he is an expert at solving psychological problems. In this case the structure of the situation becomes “skewed,” the center of gravity shifts to the therapist's activity and, in order to even out the situation, he has to “strengthen” the client's own activity toward the problem by actualizing his initiative and responsibility. “You have quite a bit of experience in dealing with this problem, but right now the usual coping methods have proved inadequate, and you are thinking, where else can I find the strength and means to deal with this?”—comments of this kind, without adding anything to the content of the problem under discussion, position the client as the proprietor of his own life by trying to stimulate his activity in the therapeutic work).

Tempering tasks⁵ arise in connection with managing the therapeutic process in its diachronic aspect. For therapy to be effective, it is not enough that the structure of the therapeutic situation have “whole form” of the therapeutic situation structure; the process itself must be “well tempered.” Here are some of the tasks of psychotherapeutic tempering:

1. working through the goals of the psychotherapy contract;
2. “punctuating” the therapeutic process—the psychotechnical separation and linkage of various phases of therapy (“I have the feeling that we have exhausted the topic of your relations with women as much as we can, and we seem now to be opening completely different chapters—that of your vocation and your overall sense of the meaninglessness of life”);
3. the task of the psychotherapeutic “endgame”: the conclusion of counseling and the entire therapeutic process—one of the most difficult technical elements of the therapeutic art (the “endgame” can be carried out in various styles of summing up, formulation of tasks, expectation of changes, recollections of the ground covered, etc.).

This list of tasks is not nearly complete; these are merely a few illustrations. It is important to note that structuring and tempering tasks in the actual therapeutic process are not performed separately. Keeping the structure of the situation balanced and keeping the tempo of the process may be compared to riding a bicycle—maintaining the cyclist's equilibrium is tied to the speed and any change in direction of movement; so, for example, an inclined position, which at a slow speed and with linear motion would result in a fall, turns out to be more stable when the cyclist takes the banked curve more rapidly. Besides the fact that structuring and tempering tasks are carried out together and interdependently, in the context of coexperiencing psychotherapy they are also tied to the tasks of experiencing and coexperiencing, and are carried out not apart from or above and beyond these tasks but in combination with them, in the material of fulfilling these tasks. (If the therapist responds to a complaint from the client about having a sense of chaos, darkness, and emptiness roughly with the phrase, "Have I gotten this right that you would ultimately like to find order, some enlightenment and fullness in life but right now you don't even believe that this is possible?" this therapeutic action may be assessed both as a primary work-through of the request and goals of therapy and as a therapeutic "chord" made up of the two psychotechnical units of clarification and empathy that is attempting to launch the process of productive elimination of the state of depression).

In technical terms, structuring and tempering tasks are most often carried out by a combination of certain basic psychotechnical operations.

Psychotherapeutic methods

Before describing several psychotherapeutic techniques that have been developed within the framework of coexperiencing psychotherapy, we must say a few words about the place in it of "technique" in general. Most of the therapeutic process manages entirely without special procedural work; it is more the exception than the rule. Indeed, if the main reliance of the method of coexperiencing psychotherapy is toward the process of the patient's experiencing and if its style is nondirective following of the client in the spirit of [Carl] Rogers's person-centered psychotherapy, then is it permissible to deliberately dwell on a local problem or symptom, is it permissible

to use a special psychotherapeutic technique, does the therapy not contradict itself, is it not “incongruent?” These are not idle questions. “Methodical” work is capable of intensifying the process and at times leads to a rapid psychotherapeutic outcome, but the cost for efficiency may become too great and strategically unjustified. A cost must be paid, first, in the therapeutic relationship, which loses its personal quality and assumes a functional quality, and second, in the client’s activeness and initiative, which shift toward the pole of the psychotherapist. That is why the answer to the question of whether a specialist in coexperiencing psychotherapy should be proficient in the “techniques” of symptomatic work is this: yes, he should, but in order to avoid their use as much as possible. Thus, the level of a master of martial arts may be certified not by the fact that he becomes involved in any developing conflict but precisely by how seldom, even in tense situations, he has to engage in hand-to-hand combat.

Nevertheless, sooner or later a psychotherapeutic method is applied. Then the main problem is the ability to inscribing the method into the usual process of person-oriented work and ensuring a transition from this kind of process and a return to a process wherein the personal atmosphere of the relationship is preserved, so that the application itself of the method is aesthetically incorporated into the therapeutic session as an organic part of personal dialogue.

The methods developed in coexperiencing psychotherapy correlate with the basic general psychological schemes—the typology of life-worlds, the typology of experiencing, and the typology of critical situations. These correlations are not complete, but still fairly clear. This article will briefly describe three methods. The first of them, the method of “Directing the symptoms” makes use above all of the patterns of the creative life-world and creative experiencing. The “psychotechnics of choice” method implements the patterns of value-oriented experiencing in the critical situation of an internal conflict. The “psychotherapeutic pain relief” method is aimed at working with stress, relying primarily on the patterns of realistic experiencing.

Directing the symptom

The technical essence of the “directing the symptom” psychotherapeutic procedure lies in the fact that the therapist creates a special

situation in which the client does not describe to him a certain painful condition or symptom but *teaches* the therapist how to deliberately induce and experience the symptom. This paradoxical change in the client's position brings about a radical change in his attitude toward the symptom: this is not the attitude of a victim toward his torturer but the attitude of an artisan to artist, which presupposes a profound and subtle awareness of the mechanisms for voluntarily summoning up the symptom. Taking control of one's symptom has a healing effect.

In practical terms, the "directing" method has proved to be quite effective. But it is equally important to point out the theoretical point of the procedure. It is: (a) to demonstrate in a concentrated form the idea of coexperiencing, which may be manifested not in a mental understanding of the client's feelings and thoughts but in getting through flesh into his life-world, when the therapist's body itself becomes a superfine instrument of therapeutic understanding—to be sure, infecting it in a controlled and manageable way, but never totally; (b) to show the abundant possibilities for psychotherapeutic technique, and for work with altered states of consciousness, in particular, that the application of the idea consciousness registers on the procedural level (Vasilyuk, 1992).

The psychotechnics of choice

This psychotherapeutic procedure is designed for work with the problem of internal conflict. But who actually classifies the problem as a conflict—the client or the therapist? According to the psychotechnical interpretation of the category of "problem," which rejects the naturalistic concept of a problem as something independent of the client's consciousness and of communications between the client and the therapist. Various problem situations of the patient may be reinterpreted as conflicts. We refer to such psychotechnical reinterpretations that give the material of the client's complaints the form of a specific critical situation as *formatting* a problem. Formatting is not a monologic act by the therapist but sometimes is a quite intensive "negotiation" with the client, the subject matter of which becomes the interpretation of a client's critical life situation. If the client and the therapist reach a consensus in formatting the problem as a problem of internal conflict, this creates conditions for using this procedure even in

cases where the patient at the beginning of the counseling process did not regard the situation as one of choice.

The “psychotechnics of choice” procedure implements ideas obtained in an analysis of the patterns of a value-oriented life-world. According to this analysis:

- the alternatives among which the choice is made are not different objects or modes of acting but significant life relationships, each of which symbolizes a special way of life;
- a true choice is based not on the idea of the self-identity of the individual but on the idea of a personal metamorphosis;
- the internal structure of choice includes an act of sacrifice as a necessary element; and
- unlike the traditional, rationalist understanding of the act of choice as a voluntary, conscious and reasoned “weighing” of advantages, it should be thought of as an act in which a person tries to quench down the activity of reasoning, quiet down, and attempt to hear the voice of one’s own values. One might say that the person does not make the choice, but in a certain sense the choice makes the person.

This technique, by psychotechnically implementing the basic idea of existential choice, helps the client to enter a state of consciousness where he can rid himself of the false and onerous model of “weighing” and where his internal values are given a chance to have the final say in the act of choice.

The technique demonstrates the possibilities of psychotechnical use of the typology of life-worlds for concrete therapeutic purposes. This typology, therefore, is not just a basic ontological scheme but also a source for designing psychotherapeutic methods (Vasilyuk, 1997c).

Psychotherapeutic pain relief

This technique (Vasilyuk, 1997a) is designed for psychotherapeutic work with a pain syndrome. The general scheme of the technique is fairly simple: (a) creation of a certain aesthetic outline; (b) indication of the pain; (c) identification of the “healing” context; (d) the transposition of the patient’s consciousness to the healing context and “living through” the healing context; and (e) the creation of a post-therapy set. In this schematic summary the technique looks

like one of the numerous variations of the Ericksonian theme. Indeed, from a technical standpoint not much will be found in this technique that is specific to coexperiencing psychotherapy.

Specific to coexperiencing therapy, here is the key mechanism, which rests on the distinction between pain and the *meaning of pain*. Suffering, from this perspective, may be described as the dynamic relation of pain to the meaning of pain: suffering increases in proportion to the direct sensation of pain and in inverse proportion to the meaning of pain. Coexperiencing psychotherapy sees its task not as ridding a person of suffering but as assisting him in the work of suffering. With respect to the problem of pain, this assistance lies not so much in reducing the intensity of the sensations of pain as in uncovering the semantic context in which pain acquires meaning.

In order for this work to come to life, it is also necessary to establish a creative, aesthetic relationship in which the therapist and the client become the coauthors of a psychotherapeutic text that unfolds according to the laws of aesthetics and not just psychology.

From these two aspects of the method, we can draw important overall conclusions: coexperiencing psychotherapy, even when working with local, situational, virtually physiological symptoms such as pain, remains meaning-oriented psychotherapy, a *logotherapy*, to use V. Frankl's term. Its second feature that is manifested at every level of work, including even work with stress, lies in the fact that coexperiencing psychotherapy is *art therapy*. Art therapy not in the sense of using specific arts as particular work tools but in the sense of carrying out the entire psychotherapeutic process, in terms of both its "matter" and its composition according to the laws of a work of art.

* * *

The methods described in this section derive from the theoretical and technical premises of coexperiencing psychotherapy and, nevertheless, one cannot get a notion of the characteristic style of coexperiencing psychotherapy from them. As has already been mentioned, such methods are used fairly seldom in coexperiencing psychotherapy, because a technique is aimed, as a rule, at a specific symptom, while the strategic direction of coexperiencing psychotherapy is person- rather than symptom-oriented. A technique in coexperiencing psychotherapy is not a routine tool but a curve in the psychotherapeutic road. The entire road certainly does not consist

of only curves, although they cannot be avoided. For scientific and didactic purposes, however, a technique is of great value, because it expresses in concentrated form all of the technical and theoretical achievements of the psychotechnical system.

Conclusion

In closing out this summary of the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy (or in the Russian version “understanding psychotherapy”), we should focus once more on its actual name—why is it called *coexperiencing* psychotherapy? The answer to this question is tied directly to the methodological type of the approach being developed. As has already been mentioned, the overview of historical models of psychotechnical systems shows that they were named not according to the main subject matter of inquiry but according to the method that simultaneously offered both practical and cognitive validity. Freud did not name his system “the psychology of the unconscious” but rather, psychoanalysis; Galperin did not call his framework “the theory of mental actions” but rather, the theory of stage-by-stage formation of mental actions. In both cases, the method itself (analysis, formation) provided the key term for the name of the psychotechnical system. This is logical: if a psychotechnical system at the methodological level, as Vygotsky insisted, is a “philosophy of practice,” then at the concrete conceptual level it should be a “theory of method.” In our system, the general principle of the psychotherapeutic method is expressed by the category of understanding, and the concrete, basic methods consist of various types of understanding (maieutics, empathy, interpretation, etc.), so in view of the aforementioned historical precedents this system not simply can, but in a certain sense must, be called *coexperiencing* psychotherapy.

In order to define itself, any framework must determine its place among existing schools and approaches. But this branch itself is growing, under the direct influence of person-centered psychotherapy, as it tries to use the theoretical juices of Russian psychology for cultivating Carl Rogers’s psychotherapeutic approach. Of course, these are merely metaphors and declarations, which will not replace a resolution of the fundamental task—analyzing the methodological compatibility of cultural-activity psychology and the person-centered approach.

As for a comparison of coexperiencing psychotherapy with other psychotherapeutic theories, it is easy to notice many important similarities to many of them, especially in work methods. Above we discussed the affinity with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and art therapy. Other illustrations—for example, maieutics as one of the basic procedural techniques—are aimed at stimulating reflection in regard to the client's prejudices and biases that underlie his complaints. In this respect coexperiencing psychotherapy is clearly comparable to Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy (1976). The use of a parameter of variation in understanding therapeutic responses such as the "persona," when certain aspects of the client's internal experience "return" to him in the form of interaction among his internal "personas" (e.g., "Have I gotten it right that you are confused—*your heart* is straining to be free, but your *mind* is stopping it, calming it down, reasoning with it, as it were—stop, think about whether everything has been done"), resembles psychodramatic psychotherapy. There are many other examples, but it is more important here to formulate the task—to systematically describe the procedural and theoretical elements of coexperiencing psychotherapy that are the "analogues," "homologues," and transplants of other psychotherapeutic systems and analyzing the status of these elements in coexperiencing psychotherapy. None of these tasks should be interpreted as just running down a list and taking inventory. Becoming oriented in the field of "world psychotherapy" is necessary not merely to determine the "coordinates" of the position of coexperiencing psychotherapy; the reliance itself is a way of developing the psychotechnical system, the method for which consists of "comparative psychotherapy studies" (Tsapkin, 2004).

But the main area of development of a system, as soon as it declares itself to be "psychotechnical," consists of advancing a research program that in concrete forms will implement the overall methodological principle of cooperation among science, practice, and education. There is no room here for a detailed description of this program, but it is possible and important to cite several models and types of research projects that are carrying it out.

First is the psychotechnical transcription of classic psychological experiments. For example, a dissertation by A.N. Molostova (2006; under the direction of V.K. Zaretskii and F.E. Vasilyuk) presents a psychotechnical version of Duncker's famous experiments in the study of creative thinking. When the examinee addresses

the creative problem, the experimenter does not imitate a neutral “recording instrument” whose principal function is to record the problem-solving process, as was the case in the classic version, but takes a “participatory” research position. He actively involves himself in interaction with the person, supporting his holistic thinking process in a controlled manner without getting into a discussion of the content of the problem itself. (For example, when a test subject has hit the table with his fist in frustration and turned away from the sheet with the problem on it, the experimenter may say: “It looks like you have gotten angry at this problem and at yourself and you feel that you are losing the desire to finish the job.”) The methods of such involvement consist of the procedures that make up the technical alphabet of coexperiencing psychotherapy (empathy, understanding, maieutics, interpretation). What becomes the subject matter of the study is not only the test subject’s creative thinking but also which psychotechnical communicative program creates the optimal conditions for the creative act. This first type of concrete psychotechnical scientific model in the context of coexperiencing psychotherapy may be defined as a *participatory study*.

This kind of experimental scheme offers a dual methodological benefit. On the one hand, psychotherapy works for psychology by giving it the methods that become the instrument of experimentation. On the other hand, psychology works for psychotherapy, since the procedure and process of the experiment themselves superbly model the therapeutic process. Indeed, the test subject develops a “quasi-need” (Levin, 2000) to solve the problem, which is soon frustrated because of unforeseen difficulties that arise in the solving process. As a result, the work of experiencing to cope with the frustration is actualized in the test subject, and the experimental psychologist uses various psychotherapeutic methods to try to support this work of experiencing. All this creates conditions that are very similar to the situation of the psychotherapeutic process. Such modeling makes it possible to study psychotherapy experimentally without actual psychotherapy.

The second type of concrete scientific research as part of the research program, in contrast to the first “participatory study,” should be called a “study of participation.” An example is the dissertation work by E.V. Sheriagina (2006), which was conducted under the author’s guidance. It studied the process of consolation. The choice of the subject matter of the study is not accidental. Coexperiencing

psychotherapy regards the process of experiencing as the main productive process at the pole of the client through which therapeutic results are ultimately achieved. The study advances the hypothesis that a person forms the activity of experiencing according to the general law of the formation of higher psychic functions, as formulated by Vygotsky. The means, devices, and style of experiencing take shape in a child in communicative situations, which generally may be defined as “consoling situations.” These are situations in which a child’s pain and dissatisfaction become the subject matter of an adult’s action specifically aimed at them, although it is not necessarily consolation per se—the child may be distracted, calmed down, urged to be patient, put to shame for his inability to be patient, accused, and so on. The culture of consolation is internalized and turns into a culture of the activity of experiencing.

The work of experiencing in the patient certainly does not begin when the therapy session begins. His experiencing is not a clean slate. A person who comes to a psychotherapy session brings with him not only his critical situation but also the process of experiencing it that has already developed (or come to a dead end or become lost)—a process that is taking place in a routine style, in which various helpful, consoling figures that are ontogenetically built into it are participating. This is the reality that the psychotherapist has to deal with, the one in which he must orient himself and participate. That is why it is so important for coexperiencing psychotherapy to study the patterns, types, and genres of the consolation process.

The third type of scientific model is represented in the work of our graduate student O. V. Shvedovskii (2006), “The Microdynamics of Personality Changes in the Process of Coexperiencing Psychotherapy.” In terms of its procedural approach, like the previous type, it implements a classic scientific paradigm. Its contribution to the development of the psychotechnical system of coexperiencing psychotherapy expresses itself in testing the extent to which the methods of mathematical modeling are capable of adequately reflecting the complex and hard-to-objectify reality of the therapeutic process, but as in the field of theory, its principal value lies not so much in the method as in the formation of the subject matter of study. This study was able to show that it is possible to isolate the most minute *quanta* of the psychotherapeutic process whose analysis can be used to predict the dynamics of therapy roughly in the same way that the analysis of a drop of blood may be used to

judge the condition of an entire organism. The fundamental fact established by this study is that a quantum of therapy is structured, as it were, “androgynously,” that is, it consists of an act of the client’s consciousness and an act of the therapist’s consciousness not separately, but a single act of some *collective personality* that is formed in therapy, where both “coauthors” of the therapy process, if they fall into a specific semantic rhythm with each other, become a single figure.

The fourth type of study in the research program is methodologically the most complex but at the same time the most intriguing one. We can call it “supervisory research.” An example is a work by our colleague Iu.V. Shchukina (2004). The complexity of supervisory research becomes clear when it is compared with the previous types of research projects.

Each of them is defined by two principal structural components: the “approach” and the “subject matter.” We can, for purposes of this discussion, distinguish between two kinds of approaches: (1) a *contemplatively detached* approach (corresponding to the paradigm of classical science), and (2) an *actively dialogic* approach. Similarly, the following distinction may be introduced for the kinds of subject matter of study: (1) the subject matter may be represented *objectively*—as a natural reality defined in and by itself, which changes according to a pattern when conditions change; (2) another variation of representing the subject matter may be called *synergetic*: in this case, one person’s psychological processes are regarded as fundamentally undetermined outside the activity-based, dialogic context and are not recognized as an independent reality to be studied, but only as an “atom” whose existence is defined by the “molecule” of the associated activity-based, dialogic process that surrounds it.⁶ That is what becomes the subject matter of study.

These distinctions provide the basis for a simple typological table of types of scientific models in the context of the research program (Table 8).

This typological table permits a more rigorous systematization of the above-mentioned varieties and examples of psychotechnical research. Molostova’s experiment falls under the third type and is an illustration of a “participatory study”: the subject matter of the study (creative thinking) is interpreted here in terms of an object—as a separate reality, but this reality is not examined from

Table 8

A Typology of Research Projects

RESEARCH PROJECT		SUBJECT MATTER	
		Object	Synergy
APPROACH	"Contemplatively detached"	1. "Classical study"	2. "Study of participation"
	"Actively dialogic"	3. "Participatory study"	4. "Supervisory study"

a contemplatively detached position but by means of psychotechnical involvement in it, through the controlled participation of an experimenter in the test subject's process that is being studied.

The study of consolation in Sheriagina's work (2006), as well as the study of the microdynamics of personality changes in Shvedovskii's work (2006), belongs to the second type, where, conversely the subject matter of study is given "synergetically"—as the related activity of two subjects, but the method of inquiry is quite traditional and uses a detached, analytical reliance. The typological difference between these two studies is that in one case emotional support in an everyday context is examined, while in the other it is professional psychological care.

The first type of study, under this typology, represents a classic scientific framework—a *detached study of a natural object*. A "natural object" is, first, an object rather than an activity that has a person's will as its source. Second, makes it "natural" is that it functions by its own given laws. This is the positioning of an object in a classical research paradigm. The "detachment" of the research method assumes that the research procedures ideally are "disembodied" and do not have an effect on the functioning of the object. This is the ideal paradigm (it is a completely different question how close one can get to this ideal in actual research practice).

The resulting typological table shows with geometric clarity the source of the great complexity of designing and conducting research that falls under the fourth type, which we call "supervisory" here. It is the farthest removed from "true," classic scientific research; in it, one has to conduct a participatory study of a participatory reality or a dialogically active study of a synergetic reality.

The supervisory situation itself assumes deep human contact between the supervisor and the supervised therapist, which in form and spirit is similar (but not identical) to the therapist's own contact with the patient. Supervision is not simply oversight by an experienced specialist of a less experienced one, not simply a consilium, not simply an examination of a clinical case, not simply an analysis of mistakes and a search for the optimal tactics for continuing the therapy, not simply a prevention of mental disorders and therapy for the therapist, although it does include all of these aspects; it is an active, dialogic study of therapeutic reality. But who is studying whom (or what) here? The surprising, distinctive feature of the supervisory process is that it creates conditions in which, in a certain sense, this reality itself begins to explore and discover itself. At work in it is a paradoxical Socratic logic under which the truth-seeker must turn inward and thereby allow the truth to find itself.

What is the result of a developed, completed, successful supervisory process? Newly discovered clinical-psychological patterns, new technical devices, new theoretical psychological and psychotherapeutic ideas, new understandings of the concrete clinical case and pathways of therapy—yes, all this and much more; but the principal benefit is the new consciousness of the therapist himself. A supervisory study becomes a tool of professional development of the therapist's personality or, to be more precise, it becomes the development of the therapist's professional personality. This is an extremely important result, especially in view of the fact that psychology is increasingly becoming not a particular scientific discipline but, above all, a humanitarian practice whose development proceeds not only through the development of ideas but also through the development of people.

The second, and no less important, scientific benefit of supervision is that this process is capable of creating a "school." The historical experience of the development of science shows that in the vast majority of cases, real scientific achievements become possible when a scientist's gifted personality enters and grows up in a genuine, ardent, energized, communicative environment of people who have a closely aligned vision of a single reality and a common language of describing this reality. Supervision, by its very structure, has a tendency and potential to produce a "school"—an environment that nurtures and breeds a creatively learning personality.⁷ Thus, a supervisory study is a highly

important and complex type of psychological research within the framework of coexperiencing psychotherapy.

As important as the development of the psychotherapist's personality and of a "school" is, it is impossible to avoid a question from canonical science: can supervision itself, in addition, objectify and frame in a form customary for science the products of the knowledge acquired, or are its lot and mission to just remain being the molten magma in which these ideas are born but cannot assume definite, congealed, solid forms?

Once again we ask ourselves the question, what is the main purpose of this attempt to construct a psychotechnical system? Almost thirty years ago, when asked what psychology's main problem was at the moment, M.K. Mamardashvili (1984), after pondering with one puff on his famous pipe, replied: "As always—the problem of survival." This response is extremely relevant to our psychology and at the beginning of the new century, and not in the ordinary sense of the comfortable adaptation of psychology and psychologists to present-day realities but in the true "biological" sense. To survive means to preserve one's integrity, to reproduce oneself, and to develop. Having become a real social force and generating numerous seedlings of psychological practice, Russian psychology as a whole has entered a dangerous state where these three "biological" tasks are being handled in an extremely disharmonious way. The aforementioned schism between Russian academic psychology and psychological practice is leading not only to a threat to the integrity and self-identity of psychology but also to a point where parallel systems of its cultural reproduction are taking shape. The educational institutions that provide serious academic training based on the Russian psychological tradition most often sacrifice a specialist's practical skill; and to the extent that the practical art is taught, it mostly focuses on one of the foreign systems, and as a result a fissure is already running through the educational program itself. As for the educational institutions or programs that emphasize practice, they either take an attitude of arrogance toward the impractical university "babblers" or provide systematic, well-balanced theoretical and practical training according to one of the Western psychotherapeutic approaches, in which, of course, the name "Vygotsky" does not even make an appearance. As a result, a joyless prospect is taking shape for accomplishing the third "biological" task—the task of development.

The situation is methodologically dangerous, but the danger presents a potentially productive challenge. The creation of psychotechnical systems is, in our view, the proper way of answering this challenge. Such systems constitute a perfect marriage between psychological theory and practice. The methodological roots of this work lie in the “philosophy of practice” by Vygotsky. The tree of cultural-activity psychology growing from these roots has different branches. The experience of cultivating one of these branches has been described in this article.

Notes

1. A psychologist's professional presence in clinic, school, factory, or army is optional. The absence of a psychologist is not critical for the core process of someone else's practice. If psychologists take into their heads to go on strike—the hospital will not stop treating patients, schools will continue to teach, factories to produce, and armies to fight. But a crisis hotline, for example, is another matter—without psychologists it might as well shut down.

2. According to H. Münsterberg (1924), the subject matter of psychotechnics is consciousness; its method, practice; and the area of application of psychotechnics, culture.

3. The process of development of psychotherapy, to be sure, does not end here, and one can predict that the major branches of the historical pathways of psychotherapy in the early decades of the twenty-first century will overlap, on the one hand, with various spiritual traditions, and on the other, with art, which of course presupposes the emergence of new psychotherapeutic reliances (see Vasilyuk, 2005).

4. “The idea of logical time in the analytical process allowed Jacques Lacan to develop concepts such as the punctuation of session and chanting, which in its turn laid a foundation for the practice of sessions with variable duration—the end of a session is determined by the logical time of each session, not obsessively established by an IPA duration of fifty minutes” (Tsapkin, 2008).

5. From the Latin *temperatio*—commensurateness, correct relationship. The musical meaning of the term given in dictionaries is the precise establishment of the pitch level and quantity of sounds in a certain historically developed system of musical sounds. Using this analogy, we can say that each psychotherapeutic approach introduces its own tempering system, which regulates both the formal frequency and length of sessions and the substantive and narrative understanding of the internal logic of the phases and stages of therapy.

6. These are simple things that are difficult to formulate: for example, a school child's learning activity cannot be studied as an independent object in the abstract from the collectively distributed activity in which he himself and other participants in the educational processes are involved (see Rubtsov, 1996).

7. This refers more to group forms of supervision, but individual supervision also has the potential for creating a milieu of like-minded colleagues.

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