

# opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 34, 2018, Especial N°

# 14

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385  
Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Maracaibo - Venezuela

## Postmodern psychology of personality

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### Abstract

This article provides an analysis of the postmodern psychology of personality and outlines its main contours formed by means of textual, nomadological, schizoanalytical, narratologic, simulative and synergistic approaches. On the basis of the analysis of a great number of works, we show that the majority of the studied psychological mechanisms are secondary reconstructions induced by the main vector of psychical dynamics, which has barely been studied in psychology. As we show, to achieve a more effective psycho-correction of an addicted person, it is necessary to take into account the fundamental unpredictability and paradoxical character of this person's future semantic processes.

**Keywords:** postmodern psychology, textual, semantic.

# Psicología posmoderna de la personalidad

## Resumen

Este artículo proporciona un análisis de la psicología posmoderna de la personalidad y delinea sus principales contornos formados mediante enfoques textuales, nomadológicos, esquizoanalíticos, narratológicos, simulativos y sinérgicos. Sobre la base del análisis de un gran número de trabajos, mostramos que la mayoría de los mecanismos psicológicos estudiados son reconstrucciones secundarias inducidas por el principal vector de dinámica psíquica, que apenas ha sido estudiado en psicología. Como mostramos, para lograr una psicoterapia más efectiva de una persona adicta, es necesario tener en cuenta la imprevisibilidad fundamental y el carácter paradójico de los procesos semánticos futuros de esta persona.

**Palabras clave:** psicología posmoderna, textual, semántica

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The psychology of the addicted personality (either drug addiction, alcoholism, inhalant addiction, gambling addiction, sports fanaticism, Internet addiction or other kinds of addictions) related to adolescents and young people in Russia is becoming one of the most significant problems in the context of those negative social and psychological consequences that such behavior can cause. One of the reasons for the aforesaid is the lack of a clear and exact scientific and psychological concept of an addicted personality, and as a consequence, the insufficiency of knowledge on the psychology of addiction. It is evident that this theoretical problem is one of a general

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character. However, despite this and against the background of a small number of empirical studies, there are practically no attempts being carried out to produce theoretical generalizations. And even if such attempts are done, we can say that the results of those studies are interpreted within the framework of traditional classical approaches. Therefore, below we will try to analyze the nonclassical approach to the psychology of personality with the purpose of developing new nonclassical approaches to the problem of the addictive personality (Garifullin, 2005a).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

We study postmodern approaches to the psychology of the addicted personality by reviewing and analyzing our previous works as well as other authors' studies on this topic.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The problem of development of non classical psychology has already been formulated by various authors. Thanks to Garifullin (2005a) attention to non-adaptive processes, as well as Leontev's(2007)involvement with the existential-mediation aspect of semantic reality, Russian psychologists managed to escape the trap of the zombie fying predictable existential world, to which the individuum always adapted only by means of the principle of congruity. It is known that these authors added new guidelines to the postmodern psychology of personality, moving from vital activity to vital creativity, from semantic regulation to regulation of meanings,

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from the psychology of a changing personality to the psychology of a self-creating and self-changing personality that is also able to create and change its own vital world. Nevertheless, one should ask whether it is possible to strive, on the one hand, for a unified systemic conception, thereby manifesting attitudes of postmodern psychology and philosophy, while, on the other hand, aiming to build postmodern psychology, which must be characterized for being rhizomorphic, which implies the absence of binarities and the opposition of subject to object, inner to outer, center to the periphery, and so on (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). The explanation of psychic reality exclusively on the basis of semantic mechanisms in combination with simpler explanatory logics, despite its sophistication, never goes beyond the postulate of congruity, since there is a preset regulatory principle that determines the hierarchical system of criteria which the subject's entire activity is congruent with.

At the same time, practical psychology demonstrates that there are forms of human behavior that are not subject to a semantic explanation. As an example, we can mention non-adaptive activity phenomena described by Petrenko's (1997), as well as the value choice situation constructed by Petrenko's (1997), (when it is impossible to compare alternatives in a single semantic coordinate system, as it is done in simpler cases). Thus, a question arises as to what degree such a global and ubiquitous implementation of the concept of meaning for the description of the psyche has a heuristic potential. All the more so since Petrenko's (1997) work on the semantics of the consciousness

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have detected phenomena related to the semantic disruptiveness of the human consciousness, i.e. there is not a complete filling of the psyche with meaning. Moreover, the concept of meaning, in the traditional sense, always takes us back to the past, back to something that has gone away and requires reflection, ignoring what is happening here and now. Perhaps the time has come to understand something else as meaning? Are semantic processes the real root cause of mental and semantic dynamics?

On the basis of an analysis of many works, we have shown Garifullin (2005b) that the majority of the studied psychic mechanisms are secondary reconstructions induced by the main vector of psychic dynamics. In our opinion, this vector has barely been studied in psychology (the dynamics of the unpredictable intrapsychic and extrapsychic being in which the human psyche is abandoned; non-adaptive processes, etc.). In addition, when analyzing the dynamics of the semantic reality, one cannot ignore the studies Garifullin (1997) claiming that the individual has the ability not only to search for meaning but also to seek illusions, delusions, that is, occasional meaningless formations. Having got into a non-adaptive process condition, the individual begins to form nonsense with such speed and frequency that it (nonsense) is no longer perceived as such and becomes a semantic formation. The analysis shows that only the concept of meaning, being an ubiquitous operator or scriptor (a concept from postmodern philosophy) between various psychic worlds and structures, can become one of the central categories of psychology (postmodern psychology), integrating and seemingly penetrating

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different levels of the psyche: emotions and thinking, conscious and unconscious, depth and top psychic phenomena. We are not talking here about the meaning as a conscious mental process, but about certain information operators of relationship. Therefore, we have to talk of the semantic reality as a kind of continuum, a fabric formed on the basis of life relations, the life world of the subject within the process of existential mediation of semantic formations. On the other hand, the semantic reality is an aggregate of various components of the personality semantic structure that does not have a hierarchy, and depending on their stability and dynamics, these components, while flowing into each other, turn into motives, semantic guidelines, dispositions, constructs, and finally, personal meanings. So, for example, Petrenko's (1997) studies have shown that the cohesion and fusion of individual meanings are reflected in the fact that even negligible changes in one single meaning or one single view lead to destabilization of many other meanings.

These provisions are well described within the nomadological approach Deleuze and Guattari (1980) to the analysis of dynamic semantic structures of the addicted personality. Further, we attempted to extend the category of rhizome to semantic processes and structures. It is shown that, unlike the metaphor of root, which assumes a rigidly fixed configuration and a genetic (axial) structure, the semantic rhizome is either something that can sprout in any direction or a network of root hairs whose potential interlacement cannot be foreseen. The semantic rhizome is fundamentally procedural: it does

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not begin and never ends. It is always in the middle...(Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Such nomadic semantic reality appears as successively changing virtual structures.

The simulative approach(Garifullin, 1997), unlike the nomadological one, made it possible to detect the existence of non-dynamic, stable semantic structures (destructive values, semantic dispositions, and constructs) in the semantic structures of the investigated addicted personalities as some kind of artificially alive psychic prostheses, simulacra cut off from reality and formed both externally (e.g., by the society) and internally (e.g., by a drug). Owing to memory, the addicted personality gets stuck with these past semantic processes (for example, images of drug abuse) which never cause a feeling of boredom and extend to present processes seeking to transcend this past. As a result, the real meanings come into conflict with the preserved past meanings, this being the reason for the devastating neuroticism of the addicted personality. Thanks to these simulacra, which form a virtual semantic reality, the personality is so carried away and detached from the sober-minded semantic reality that she/he does not want to listen (pay attention) to it. This artificial semantic reality becomes more real, relevant and significant for the addicted person. This virtualizing society immerses itself not only in the inner hell of the Same (*l'enfer du Même*)—a world of artificial meanings (simulacra), but also in a world of living external meanings formed by electronic media and the Internet, which become more real and relevant than the objects of the original reality (Baudrillard, 1981).

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When these two psychic prostheses (external and internal simulacra) become identical, the sources of the natural liveliness of the psyche would apparently disappear. A personality subconscious creates delusions and illusions as projections of the world in the form of psychic prostheses: internal and external simulacra. According to their nature, these simulacra are different from the signs that arise during activity and interiorization process, since they are empty signs, inadequate to reality. This, apparently, should affect the socio-cultural component of the psyche development of future generations (Garifullin, 2015d).

Contrary to the simulative approach, where there is still a certain awareness of destructive meanings, in the schizoanalytic approach Deleuze and Guattari(1980) this awareness is missing. Based on a synthesis of the synergistic and the semantic approaches, we have shown that the positive life-affirming state of the addicted personality's psyche is the result of a stable nonequilibrium state of the semantic structures induced by an active-critical state, namely creativity, gambling, risk, overcoming, borderline states, etc. (In this paper, we understand as equilibrium the process of psychic adaptation consisting in the coincidence of the goal, as an anticipated image, and the result of an activity). On the contrary, depression is a consequence of the absence of a stable nonequilibrium state in the semantic processes and structures, i.e. the existence of a dead stable equilibrium (adaptation). This state is characterized by the presence of stable semantic structures formed from outside (for example, by ideology)

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and from within (for example, by a drug). Owing to these destructive semantic structures, the psyche of the addicted personality comes into a state of boring predictability (congruity, semantic dependence) in which non-adaptive and unpredictable creative processes cease. As a result, an individual that has never before been submerged in a virtual reality world enters a passive-critical state (negative, stable and nonequilibrium state): depression. In this critical state, even small disturbances in personal-semantic structures carried out by manipulators can lead the individual to the spontaneous decision to immerse in a virtual reality world. In addition, there are passive-critical states caused by a constant comparison of the real and virtual worlds by an addicted individual. Therefore, the addicted personality tries to artificially (i.e. virtually) escape from this boring and subject-destroying predictability, which is governed by the principle of congruency, into another one that is not boring: a world of virtual illusions which is able to artificially create a feeling of transcendence and makes it possible to transcend one's own self.

After all, a living psyche is constantly in a state of stable disequilibrium and is open to the transcendental, that is, it transcends and creates something that is not established, something that is beyond the boundaries of the principle of congruency. Consequently, the immersion in a world of virtual reality that is dangerous for the psyche is provoked by the desire to escape from a boring predictability (stable equilibrium in the semantic processes and structures), as well as from a frustrating nonequilibrium (noncoincidence of goal and result). As a

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result, the individuum receives in return a pleasing imaginary equilibrium (for example, intoxication), which also kills the subject but causes euphoria. That is, the person is disappointed by both the nonequilibrium semantic component and the equilibrium (adaptive) component, and therefore chooses an artificially organized equilibrium: intoxication, in which the result and the goal always coincide. In other words, as a result of alcohol and drug consumption, natural equilibrium and nonequilibrium in the semantic processes give way to the artificial, temporary and imaginary equilibrium of the semantic processes (Garifullin, 2005c).

This process of substitution of a living psyche with a psychic model saturated with a stable semantic reality (a striving for congruity which leads to a discrepancy between goal and results) is precisely what leads many people to mental disorders and, as a consequence, to alcohol and drug addiction (Il'In, 1996). The textual approach, based on the contextual disclosure of meanings, on the play of meanings (Aylesworth (2013), Best and Kellner (1991) and Best and Kellner (1997)), allowed to identify on a new basis the problem of collision of two semantic spaces (real and virtual) within which two different semantic realities coexist in the psyche of one addicted person. In addition, the textual approach to the psyche led us to one of the most important questions of our study: what makes a person believe that meaning exists? An answer to this question was already obtained in our previous studies (Garifullin, 1997). According to these investigations, the individual has not only the ability to search for

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meaning but also to seek illusions, delusions, that is, occasional meaningless formations. Having got into a non-adaptive process condition, an individual, driven by their needs, starts forming nonsense with such speed and frequency that it (nonsense) is no longer perceived as such and becomes a semantic formation.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

1. Take into account the fundamental unpredictability and paradoxical character of a personality's future semantic processes.
  2. Exclude the substitution of real meaning-making values with artificial ones.
  3. Reduce the likelihood of critical personality conditions able to lead to a spontaneous decision (namely, to immerse in a world of destructive virtual reality) even after small or insignificant disturbances in personal-semantic structures carried out by manipulators.
  4. The rehabilitation of an addicted person should be understood as a training of tolerance to an unacceptable psychological old age caused by destructive virtuality, and as the transition of the semantic processes determined by the psychopathological old age of the addicted personality into semantic processes of a normal old age leading to youth.
  5. Detect deficiencies of critical and nonequilibrium-stable conditions of the semantic structures, thereby reducing the
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likelihood of unpredictable psychical bifurcations leading to immersion in a world of virtual realities.

6. Solve the language problem in the dialogue of two semantic realities (virtual and real), taking into account that virtual reality obeys laws that cannot be described within the framework of the psychology of the initial reality.

7. Reduce the intensity of social schizophrenia processes.

These conclusions and provisions allow to create methods for a more effective psycho-correction and prophylaxis of the addicted personality.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 34, Especial N° 14, 2018

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.  
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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