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# The problem of Lenin's self-identification and the Russian revolution

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## **Abstract**

The study aims to investigate the problem of Lenin's self-identification and the Russian revolution from the perspective of psychological history via a cultural-historical approach. As a result, in Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, a person's ability to experience appears as a dynamic unit in which the effect and intellect combine emotional and cognitive aspects, acting as an indicator and significant personality characteristic. In conclusion, the last feature perceived today as an absolute anachronism, at that time nevertheless reflected not only the way of communication (or rather, anti-communication) but also the modernization model of social development as a whole.

**Keywords:** Lenin, Habitus, Personality, Identity, Psychosomatics.

## El problema de la autoidentificación de Lenin y la revolución rusa

### **Resumen**

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar el problema de la autoidentificación de Lenin y la revolución rusa desde la perspectiva de la historia psicológica a través de un enfoque histórico-cultural. Como resultado, en la teoría cultural-histórica de Vygotsky, la capacidad de experimentar de una persona aparece como una unidad

dinámica en la que el efecto y el intelecto combinan aspectos emocionales y cognitivos, actuando como un indicador y una característica importante de la personalidad. En conclusión, la última característica percibida hoy como un anacronismo absoluto, en ese momento reflejaba no solo la forma de comunicación (o más bien, anticomunicación) sino también el modelo de modernización del desarrollo social en su conjunto.

**Palabras clave:** Lenin, Hábito, Personalidad, Identidad, Psicósomática.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today it is obvious that the image of the Leninist deity, which existed throughout the entire period of Soviet history and served society as a completely effective spiritual and moral support, was created according to Stalin's patterns. At the XIII Party Conference, at which there was no longer a seriously ill head of the Soviet state, STALIN (1947), accusing the opposition of insincerity of feelings for Lenin and, as if competing with them for the right to be the first to call him the genius of genius, ranked himself among the leader's disciples, emphasizing that such people are born for centuries. The epithets mountain eagle and genius of revolution, which he addressed to Lenin in a speech at the evening of Kremlin cadets on January 28, 1924, became a kind of pass, first for his movement towards his cherished goal - the supreme power, and then - for its retention and use. Otherwise, how to explain the attitude, first, of official politics and ideology towards LENIN (1975) after his death, first, as to mimosa in the botanical garden, which led to a cult of the leader, which gradually

turned into the cult of Stalin?

Among the densely equipped skeletons in the closet, the question of origin was the central problem of Lenin's self-identification. The concept of identity expresses the idea of identity and constancy of the individual and his self-awareness. It is considered in three modalities: as a category of unity and continuity of all psychophysiological processes; as a way of perceiving a person's self as a subject of activity in which goals, motives, and attitudes form a self-reflecting in terms of one's own biography; as the ability of a person to realize his belonging to certain communities, turning him into a social individual. The perspective of identity makes the perception of the personality and understanding of its role in history, especially at its sharp turns, the most complete, and, therefore, reliable.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Among many ideas about what a personality is and what its nature is, we will rely on the cultural-historical theory of PEJN (2008), according to which a person is a soul understood socially (MIRONOV, 2015). Such an approach is possible based on the study of the genesis, sources, and mechanisms of its development. Being system-forming, this concept does not exist outside such categories as motive, attitude, experience, image, action. With their help, the personality, being initially external in relation to its carrier, the personality constantly learns to transfer the control of behavior from social interactions to the

individual psyche. Our task is, placing psychological accents in the perception of LENIN (1975), try to answer the question: how much such a significant figure in history really was a person, but most importantly - what does it matter for modern Russian society, which has crossed the 100-year frontier of the Great Russian Revolution.

However, the solution to this problem involves a few difficulties that seem insurmountable if we consider the figure of Lenin not as a whole, but in connection with age periods. So, the childhood period, recreated by Leninian on the basis of the memories of people close to him, can be accepted as reliable simply because of the peculiarities of this age, when the formation of the individual psyche and its most diverse manifestations, evaluated differently by others, are not yet a personality characteristic. The periods of growing up and the first contacts and even collisions with the environment could not but influence its formation, meaning that everything that was written about Lenin as an adult should be rethought in light of these important circumstances, bearing in mind that any interpretation is, by definition, subjective. Therefore, the main source for assessing Lenin is his work (VYGOTSKIJ, 2005), including unknown documents (LENIN, 1975). They reveal him as a closed person, strictly controlling his emotions and feelings about privacy, but not limiting himself in his expression on issues of state activity. For this reason, the method of analysis of situations, which allows us to consider specific life circumstances and their influence on the character and actions of Lenin, was the basis of both the source interpretation and the historiographic assessment.

The general characteristic of Lenin contains a sufficient set of

well-known traits of a professional revolutionary, which is characterized by charisma when a person is obsessed with an idea, a tendency to authoritarianism and radicalism for the sake of revolutionary expediency, and a willingness to deceive, resort to manipulation and even terror in the name of a great goal. How does one acquire such qualities or are they characteristic of him from birth? Are they a personality trait, and what role does education and upbringing play here, if we consider the process of its formation in the context of a cultural-historical approach? This approach allows us to comprehend the phenomenon of a person experiencing the problem of self-determination in a transitional era through the ontological, Hamletian world of a person in which his individual psychological and cultural-historical entities collide.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The pedigree of Lenin by the efforts of Soviet ideology has always been covered in a veil of secrecy. Today it is known that Vladimir Ulyanov was born in the family of a famous figure in education in Russia: first an inspector, then the director of public schools in the Simbirsk province I.N. Ulyanov - a peasant serf in the fourth generation. Released to quitrent, his father, LEONOV (2018), from the Nizhny Novgorod province, moved to Astrakhan, where, having mastered the craft of a tailor, in 1808 he was assigned to the bourgeois class, his son, becoming a real state adviser, as well as a

knight of the Order of St. Vladimir of the 3rd degree, received the right to transfer to the nobility, but did not use it (LENIN, 2000). The question is: why? Who was this man, a serf by birth, who rose to the rank of general but did not want to find a new identity? The widow with children, the right to be enrolled in the nobility was worth a lot of work, but, according to the source, she was able to achieve it.

Maria Blank was born in a middle-class bourgeois family that owned both land and peasants (NENAROKOV, 2016). Even after the abolition of serfdom, when the estate of her father, Alexander Blanc, was cut back, and the price of land was significantly reduced, he remained the owner of a sufficient share of real estate in the form of servants and carriages with horses in his estate Kokushkino. Family affiliation to the wealthy stratum of the urban bourgeoisie is still confirmed by the memorial museum on Moskovskaya str. in Ulyanovsk - a spacious wooden house with a piano, mirrors and candelabra, elegant mahogany carvings in the living room and separate rooms for adult children. Such a room, hung with geographical maps, was owned by Vladimir Ulyanov.

If we use the concept of the habitus of SHCHEGLOV (2017) as a system of strong acquired dispositions used by an individual in the form of initial attitudes in the process of life, it can very well be applied to the consideration of the historical figure of Lenin. The habits, rules, and actions of a person from a petty-bourgeois environment, instilled from childhood, will determine a lot in the behavior of Lenin, whose habit will act not only as of the basis of his reflexive system, but also as the foundation for the internalization of

social conventions and ways of being. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that habitus products, becoming an incentive force, are always limited by the historical and social conditions of their own formation, while reactions can be accompanied by strategic calculation in an effort to consciously perform an operation that the habitus implements differently (ZYGAR, 2018).

So, more than once using, if necessary, an indication of the acquired nobility, Lenin never recalled his origin either before or after the revolution. It seems that the dash in the column on social belonging in Lenin's personal profile, as a delegate to the 11th Congress of the RCP (B.) (LENIN: 1975), is connected with the complexity of self-identification, which has a marginal bloom of uncertainty that deeply affects his psychological well-being.

Vladimir started walking late, having learned how to do it, he often fell due to a large head growth, and once he almost drowned in a backwater near the Sviyaga River. Involuntarily one has to wonder what would happen if there were not a worker from the factory near the shore who saved V. Ulyanov. The teenager was not one of the timid, grew up restless, tricky, noisy, quick-tempered, self-willed, capable of daring actions, who loved to break toys and pester other children. Subjected to outbursts of rage, Vladimir Ulyanov ended them with an evil trick. In his fits of rage, there was a kind of frenzy, fury, as if the spirit of destruction was instilling into him (LAVROV, 2011). At the same time, Ulyanov could be obedient, appreciative and the best student. A keen, insatiable mind and a constant thirst for new knowledge from childhood developed a habit of continuous reading in

him.

Workaholic, polyglot and information addict DANILKIN (2017), even then he was aware of his superiority over his comrades and was arrogant. Straightforward, witty, accustomed to talking caustic, Vladimir Ulyanov could offend with a scornful remark not only his peer but even an adult. The separation from his environment by objective criteria of assessing intellectual capabilities (one four in logic) was probably the reason for his egocentrism. The desire for solitude, isolation, the desire to avoid communication - all this deprived Ulyanov of the possibility of friendly relations with peers. Parents, of course, proud of their son's successes, carefully analyzed his behavior. So, his father, Ilya Nikolaevich, every time thinking about the ease of Vladimir's training, was seriously worried about what would come of him if he did not find himself a difficult matter (MIRONENKO, 2017). In all other respects, the boy was like hundreds of other teenagers with their mental instability and unpredictability in behavior, which become a characteristic of a person under certain circumstances, either fixing its negative features or, on the contrary, correcting them.

The form of the individual's existence, primarily as a psychological phenomenon, is self-knowledge. Such a form, according to KONOVALOV (2014), is finite, but not the only one. Each stage of personality formation has its own form of self-knowledge, necessary for mastering the process of one's own development, which is a way of a person's existence. Two events that came to the teenage period of V. Ulyanov played a big role in this sense: the death of his father and the

execution of his older brother. If the first death made a fifteen-year-old boy grow up quickly, take over the duties of an older man in the house, then Alexander's hanging in the courtyard of the Shlisselburg fortress, without exaggeration, was a turning point in shaping the worldview of a seventeen-year-old man who said the phrase we will go by different way disseminated by Soviet propaganda.

It seems that at that moment at one point such deep feelings as a result of the father's departure and hatred of the liberals, crossed, when neither of the Simbir's representatives agreed to accompany his mother to Syzran, who immediately went to Petersburg to her arrested son, and, finally, a break with religion in connection with the death of his brother, who was always an example for him to follow in line with his father and mother. The first tests and at the same time contact with the social environment began to add up the type of personality of a young man, who gradually began to acquire internal dynamics and, of course, expressed meaning. Probably, the way of behavior of V. Ulyanov in this period was predetermined by a clear cultural norm: having a very clear desire to become a legalist, he entered Kazan University. But the external sign, as a combination of new circumstances, contributed to the reset of consciousness of the first-year student, performed because of a family situation, which turned out to be permeated through the conflict with the authorities. It is probably no coincidence that Ulyanov re-read Chernyshevsky's novel *What to Do?* five times that summer.

Then, after studying for only three months, he was noticed in a student gathering, which became the reason for expulsion from the

university and subsequent exile in Kokushkino. Returning to Kazan, Ulyanov read the Capital of Marx, the theory of which became for him a new religion [Payne, p. 83]. Next was an acquaintance with Fedoseev, joining his circle, and an attempt to pass exams at the Testing Law Commission at the Imperial St. Petersburg University, successfully completed for this self-taught only thanks to his own indestructible willpower [Payne, p. 91]. It seems that the pass to these tests, most likely, became the unconscious, but what played an important role in obtaining a document of education, was Ulyanov's membership in the nobility is an acquired status, which he would use more than once. However, the arrangement of his own life according to the criteria of this estate did not appeal to him. After reading Chamber No. 6 by A.P. Chekhov and The Catechism of the Revolutionary by Nechayev, the hereditary nobleman V. Ulyanov somehow particularly acutely felt the meaninglessness of being, he was overwhelmed by the mood of absolute nihilism and the awareness of the need for any action.

In Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, a person's ability to experience appears as a dynamic unit in which the effect and intellect combine emotional and cognitive aspects, acting as an indicator and significant personality characteristic. Back in 1921, during the transition to the NEP, Lenin began to suffer remorse, recognizing that the Soviet state made many mistakes. The main thing that tormented him was a feeling of guilt before the Russian proletariat. On December 30, 1922, already after the second stroke, realizing his condition, he asked to write: It seems that I am very guilty before the workers of

Russia (LENIN, 1975: 10).

Sayed in a certain context of the notorious issue of autonomy, the phrase, nevertheless, opens the way to studying the personal and social aspect of a person's experience, which, without considering the disease that accompanied his significant part of his adult life, can be described as absolutely immature, irresponsible, forced repent of committed atrocities only under the influence of his own weakness. If we consider the circumstance of the disease, the final phase of which occurred during the period of Lenin's return to Russia and the implementation of the revolutionary project, then his entire political path must be considered taking into account psychosomatics. It seems that only such an approach will allow one to understand the paradoxical contradictions in the way he treated the peasantry, the liberal bourgeoisie, and the working class – all those whom capitalism pulled into its orbit, first rejected by Lenin as the path of Russia's development, and then recognized as not only bringing improvements to the peasants in the pre-revolutionary period (LENIN: 1975) but also the only possible one after the collapse of the war communism policy.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

According to Vygotsky, a person, correcting himself in the process of interacting with the environment, acts as a supra-systemic formation, as a new level of organization of the psyche due to conscious control of his own mental systems. In favor of the fact that

Lenin nevertheless managed to identify pressing problems, urging delegates to the 11th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (B) not to be afraid to look directly into the eyes of reality, the indisputable fact is that he recognized the bridging gap as the central and only difficult issue for the country, lying between the immensity of our tasks and the cultural poverty of Russia. To recognize poverty in culture as the main Russian problem, you must be able to see the direct dependence of one on the other and, of course, have your own cultural foundation.

The classical European education of Lenin was such a basis, but probably not enough to come to realize the country's cultural poverty after the conscious destruction of culture as such. This, in our opinion, proves that he was not a hereditary nobleman: the petty-bourgeois environment formed his habit, the deepest impulse of which was the awakened genealogy. Yesterday's man lives in each of us, in one proportion or another. And this is the same yesterday's person who dominates us by the power of things since the present is only in a small part compared with the long past in which we were formed and where we come from. However, we do not feel this person of the past, since he is inverted in us, he makes up the unconscious part of ourselves. An idealist and destroyer, who despised his political opponents, the thinking part of Russian society only because they thought differently, Lenin appears as a person incapable of dialogue, listening and hearing only himself. The last feature perceived today as an absolute anachronism, at that time nevertheless reflected not only the way of communication (or rather, anti-communication) but also the

modernization model of social development as a whole.

For some - a gentleman, for others - a fanatic, for others - the most humane man on earth, and for some - Marx on steroids and even Pantocrator of solar dust, Lenin at the end of his life was most likely a tired slave, wasting the energy of anger on destruction, but never creating anything. His socially understood soul turned out to be dark, and therefore Lenin was only half a person. Probably, both then and now, he is something separate for everyone, and in the aggregate - everything, combining the incongruous, reflecting not only us yesterday, who deified his figure, but also us today, who decisively betray him to oblivion before a historical lesson will be learned. This fact necessitates the study of history through a psychological prism that helps not to condemn, but to understand a person and his time.

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