REVIEW

Psychology of the Possible and the Paradigm of Probabilistic Prognosis

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Abstract. The main directions and current state of the Probabilistic prognosis paradigm development are elucidated. Namely, studies of advance reflection phenomena, hypotheses generation and unconscious anticipation are described. Predictive coding theory in neurobiology is presented briefly which is actively working out at present in order to explain brain mechanisms of probabilistic prognosis. In line with the analysis of the main provisions of the Probabilistic prognosis paradigm, the monograph by V. V. Znakov "The Psychology of the Possible" (2021) is reviewed. In the V. V. Znakov's book, the Possible category is considered in different fields of psychology and is understood as a content which is potentially accessible to a human being in a perspective. The structure of V. V. Znakov's conception of the Possible is built as a fractal system of triads. In this context, new steps have been done in the study of understanding, spirituality and truth problems.

Keywords: The Possible category, a fractal system of triads, problems of understanding, spirituality and truth, probabilistic prognosis, generation of hypotheses, advance reflection, unconscious anticipation, predictive coding theory

The monograph by Viktor Vladimirovich Znakov "The Psychology of the Possible" [57] has been published, which has shown a new extremely productive stage in the author's study of a person's subjective world in the context of his (her) being. It's clear that the Possible phenomena analyzed, are quite in line with probabilistic anticipation and prognosis paradigm in psychology, which has rather long history of development already, and is working out actively at present because of very high level of contemporary human life uncertainty. Let's consider the main ideas of the book firstly, and then the most developed studies in the frame of anticipation and probabilistic prognosis paradigm, mentioned by Znakov shortly and described by the present author in more details.

The monograph is seen as a new development of the tradition of being and consciousness, and person in the world investigation, grounded by S.L. Rubinstein [36, 37] in Russian psychology. For many years Znakov worked at the Institute

of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences in close cooperation with one of the nearest followers of S.L. Rubinshtein — A.V. Brushlinsky, who created a general methodological approach in psychology on the basis of the Subject category [14] — one of the central ones in his Teacher's legacy. Therefore, the prolongation of the named profound tradition is natural and logical scientific way for Viktor Vladimirovich.

The book on Psychology of the Possible is the fundamental scientific work that reveals the philosophical, psychological, epistemological, culture — oriented and methodological content of the Possible category. Its development is traced in different fields of psychology, and characteristics are given to the concepts of affordance (opportunities provided by the environment for a subject), a predictor (a prognostic parameter and a prognosis tool). And, certainly, the author's conception of the possible is of principle theoretical importance, and its structure is built as a fractal

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system of triads. These are three realities that form the human world actuality: empirical, socio cultural and existential. It would be useful to see a clearer definition of the category "reality of the world" - intuitively it can be understood precisely as the mentioned above category of a person' subjective world in the context of his being. A subject distinguishes and understands these three realities with the help of the three key categories — "necessary", "plausible" "impossible". Besides, Znakov reveals several triads in his analysis of the Possible: the three characteristics of the unthinkable as a subspecies of the impossible; the three types determination of his understanding of external and internal world corresponding to the three realities; the three types of understanding proper cognitive, hermeneutic and existential traditions: understanding as knowledge, as interpretation and as comprehension, which corresponds to assessments of the truth, correctness and truthfulness of statements understood by people in communicative situations, as well as the three types of internal conditions of understanding: verbal figurative signs, cognitive symbols and existential symbols; the three types of social knowledge: cognitive, conventional and spiritual: the three trends in the development of the psychology of the possible: going beyond the limits of the specific activity of the subject; disclosure of the plurality of variants of the dynamics of development, ways of self-change of subjectivity in a random unpredictable world, "necessary", analytical distinction between "plausible" and "impossible"; the promising areas of psychological research on understanding post truth and lies. Such a clear structure reflects the logical completeness of the Possible concept.

Already in the listing of the epistemological triads considered by the author, it is clear that the analysis of the problem of understanding passes as a cross-cutting topic in the content of the book. In the development of this topic, he thereby makes another serious step (using new materials) towards the development of the previous equally fundamental stage in its study [56]. In the context of Psychology of the Possible Znakov also develops two other major directions of his research: the problems of spirituality and truth. Earlier the author outlined the main milestones in the understanding of spirituality by comparing the positions of psychology and religion [54], and now he extensively examines

the phenomenology of the spiritual, discusses its definitions, genesis in mental activity, theoretical models and approaches to its study. The novelty of the author's view of human spirituality lies in considering it as a three-component mental formation, the emergence of which has metapersonal, activity and spiritual-practical grounds. As for psychological problems of truth, Znakov has already analyzed them in details at the level of a monographic publication [55]. In the new book, he specifically focuses on how in modern society, truth and falsehood are correlated in Russian and Western culture, and how the significance of the truth is reduced.

In the light of the first of the identified triads the author discriminates the key categories of necessary, verisimilar and impossible, and within the framework of the latter one, the sub-concept of unthinkable is highlighted. It is extremely interesting. He attributes the specifics of the necessary to empirical reality, the verisimilar to the socio-cultural reality (and this is his next advance in the development of the problem of truth), and the impossible and the unthinkable — to the existential one. Five! types of the impossible are distinguished as found in the literature: as a contradiction between a logically permissible (not contradicting the laws of logic) and physical inadmissibility of an action (a contradiction to the laws of nature); as unreasonable, the cause of which cannot be determined; as not verisimilar (absent in the past human experience) — but the author emphasizes that this concept and the concepts is not identical to of the impossible as unknown, unknowable, meaningless.

Constructive characteristics of poorly developed concepts of the unthinkable and post-truth are given. The three characteristics of the unthinkable are: suppression of irrational by rational; going beyond boundaries of the usual moral reasoning, due to a moral choice impossibility; such a discrepancy between knowledge and the existential experience of a subject who understands the world, in which he finds himself in an ambivalent position: at the same time, it is necessary and impossible to see the unthinkable. Two directions of post truth studies are highlighted: political (fake news) and philosophical-anthropological: untrue information, which is present in the mind nevertheless and influence the behavior of thousands of people (including lie).

In general, Znakov understands the possible following S.L. Rubinstein as content, potentially accessible to a human being in a perspective. The two options of the "possible" category are separated — as an intellectual and personal choice from alternatives (truth or lie, altruism or selfishness, justification or conviction) and as the disclosure of new potentialities of an already, it would seem, analyzed topic of research, on which the modern psychology of understanding focuses.

As a direct student of B.G. Ananyev, Viktor Vladimirovich gives his characteristic of a functional organ [3]. It has to be mentioned at the same time, that earlier A.A. Ukhtomsky [45, 46] identified a temporary combination of various forces of the organism, capable to guarantee a certain achievement. Then N.A. Bernstein [11] described a functional organ as a temporary structure for combining various resources that provided purposeful human activity. In the theory of P.K. Anockhin, the functional system of a behavioral act psycho physiological mechanisms (temporarily formed to perform a specific task) has the same meaning [5, 6]. Later A.N. Leont'ev [27] has grounded (based on psychological material) that a functional organ is generated by a subject's task. It has been confirmed empirically: a temporary operational structure is built that combines cognitive resources with mechanisms of effort and activation, in order to solve a sensory task [20]. The concept of a functional organ was systematically developed by V.P. Zinchenko [51, 52] in the fields of engineering psychology and methodology.

The obvious urgency of the "Possible" concept developing is determined by the rapid changes in the modern world, which generate a high uncertainty in human life. Therefore, it's is completely justified Znakov's correlation of this concept with the problems of forecasting, anticipation, probabilistic prognosis in Russian psychology. Let's note that we would like to start the consideration of the phenomenon of anticipation with the book by B.F. Lomov and E.N. Surkov [29]. Znakov highlights justification of anticipation general meaning as an imminent property of all mental processes in their development, the necessary readiness of the subsequent stages of development by the previous ones [39]; V.D. Mendelevich's anticipatory concept of neurotic disorders, in the pathogenesis of which anticipatory failure plays a leading role [19]. Viktor Vladimirovich also characterizes this topic in the field of psychology of thinking, being a specialist in it. It is an emotional activation as an anticipation of a

principle for solving a problem [44]; demarcation of anticipation and prognosis as different ways of achieving the possible, established by the ratio of cognitive and emotional components of prognosis when solving mental problems interpretation of thinking as a movement towards the possible, which has not vet been conceived, the idea of dynamic control of uncertainty with the emphasis on anticipation and prognosis [23, 24]. In this context, Znakov refers to the definition of probabilistic prognosis as an assessment of: which actions are most likely to achieve a success in a changeable situation [17] and to the analysis of relationships between the real and the possible [34].

Certainly, Znakov's study of the Possible is quite close to anticipation and probabilistic prognosis paradigm in psychology. The present author also monitors the directions of works in this field, while systematically conducting experimental theoretical studies in threshold-type primarily, where decision-making always has a probabilistic nature, since subjective uncertainty is high (the levels of which are precisely set by the stimulation values) due to the sharp deficiency of input sensory or perceptual information [42]. Let us briefly summarize the most developed areas of works in cognitive psychology, supplementing Znakov's materials with our analysis [40, 42]. In the classical theory of perception, such phenomena are described to be a process of perceptual hypotheses testing in order to decide: which object has been perceived, made by probabilistic prognosis of their reliability when moving from features to categories [12]. In cognitive neuroscience, the generation of hypotheses is recognized as one of the main functions of the cerebral cortex, and perception is considered through anticipation [32, Probabilistic prognosis in behavior has been actively studied ([17]. P.K. Anockhin used this term to characterize the acceptor of an action results as a functional system component [38], but gave it a more global meaning, generalizing it to the principle of advance reflection of external events by the brain [4]. Active advance reflection is considered in the Anockhin's school not only as a universal attribute of all living beings' existence, which appears with the emergence of life and is represented at all levels of its organization [1], but it is understood as one of the leading functions of mind in Russian psychology as a whole. When developing methods for controlling the accuracy of advanced reflection in choosing behavior (according to Anockhin), a theoretical conclusion has been formulated that the brain is not a logical, but a predictive device. To obtain hypotheses with a controlled level of confidence, a theory of probabilistic semantic inference was proposed, which combined logical inference with calculations of probabilities and showed that in the theory of knowledge there is not only passive, catching up, but also active, anticipatory control of a probability of a decision made correctness [47, 48].

The idea of hypotheses rivalry is also realized in the model of consciousness as a competition of possible multiple sketches of behavior portions of the stream of consciousness at different stages of their analysis (corresponding to simultaneous and asynchronous patterns of brain activity) -- and the choice of one of them (Multiple Draft Models: [16]). It is similar to the conception of consciousness, which constantly test possible unconscious hypotheses about what is happening. The response awareness is the result of an unconscious process of choosing and checking one of them [2]. The model is also similar to a multi valued world image as a dynamic system of multilevel hypotheses and their continuous generation. The image of the world performs the function of a continuous prognosis as a tool of uncertainty radical reduction [43] — this work is also cited by Znakov in the section on anticipation). The conception of pre-adaptation to uncertainty has been developed as a fundamental strategy for living systems development in the course of unpredictable evolutionary routes [8]. Possible (what can happen as a result of a subject's activity) and probability are productively distinguished [28]. Znakov characterizes possible in a similar way — as a person's potential.

neurobiology, modern anticipation processes are described by Predictive Coding Theory, the key idea of which is that the brain is a multilayered predictive mechanism [15, 18, 31]. Neural processing involves the interacting upstream of sensory data and the downstream of predictions about it. Each brain level receives information from the both streams and uses the Bayesian scheme for their coordination. This scheme is applied widely in cognitive science and points that the brain evaluates the posterior probabilities of hypotheses compared when choosing the most probable one between them (see [21], for example). Even a choice of an optimal behavior under uncertainty, made by insects and rodents, is often explained by decision making models using probabilistic decision rule. And in general, the major models of decision making under uncertainty, describe it in terms of subjective probabilities of possible outcomes and of the outcomes expected utility, i.e. of their subjective values.

In humans' visual discrimination [41, 49] and in slow-warm lizards one [50], in auditory discrimination in humans [49] and in assessment of stretching in them [30], choices of erroneous decision are slower and are more often accompanied by hesitations than choices of correct decisions. Apparently, an individual doubts before making a mistake and therefore acts slowly, while he typically gives correct responses without many doubts and therefore quickly, although he does not know when he will be mistaken or will respond correctly. It may be interpreted as an unconscious anticipation of forthcoming responses uncertainty tasks. At the level of physiological mechanisms, the unconscious slowdown and uncertainty of erroneous decisions are explained by the conception of activity (before making mistakes) of cortical and sub cortical error - determinining neurons. After making erroneous decisions, the activity of error - detecting neurons is recorded [9; 25, 26]. From the standpoint of the model of decision-making and confidence in sensory and perceptual tasks, which we develop, unconscious uncertainty of an erroneous decision is the result of the accumulation of an insufficient amount of unconscious information evidence in favor of this decision choosing. But in case of sufficient evidence, the decision is made more confidently and turns out to be correct [40]. "Confidence during the decision process" and "confidence after the decision made" were recorded experimentally [35]. This echoes the theoretically distinguished primary unconscious confidence before choosing between alternatives, which serves for a person as a subjective indicator of which one to choose, and secondary conscious confidence as a subjective assessment of correctness of an already made decision [41]. In our model mentioned, these two phenomena correspond mathematically to the evidence and the confidence itself — as the magnitude of the evidence deviation from the decision-making criterion.

It is not accidentally that in the modern era of ever-increasing uncertainty in life, several classes of conceptual-mathematical models have been developed which describe decision-making as a choice between alternatives and assessment of confidence in it. Indeed, in the absence of accurate and complete knowledge, the decision is made with the help of prognosis of the goal achievement. In such conditions, confidence in the hypothesis chosen is often the only psychological tool of

decisions correctness prognosis and controlling. We have reviewed such models and develop our model in the paradigm of probabilistic prognosis as the basic mechanism of perception and choice of actions in situations of uncertainty, using the typical example of them: sensory and perceptual tasks of similar objects discrimination [40]. Confidence is viewed as a subjective indicator of future decision predicted effectiveness and as an internal feedback for assessing a decision already made. The model is based on the psychophysical Signal Detection Theory and the Bayesian paradigm, in which a formal evidence variable is introduced in favor of a certain hypothesis about an object perceived. Evidence means sensory and perceptual information received by a subject, which he uses to choose a response. Evidence is an unconscious intermediate variable between input information and a decision made. Really a person feels a degree of confidence in the future response, and on the base of confidence he chooses that response alternative, a predicted utility or success, or correctness probability of which is assessed as maximal by the brain. Confidence is conscious when he is required to evaluate it. By modifying Bayes' rule, forming of the evidence and decision-making criteria is described (which happens strictly before a decision made), as well as the control of responses utility and correctness probability with their help.

In conclusion, let us note the promising directions outlined by Znakov for further research. They are studies of post truth and lies understanding: the ratio of cognitive and personal predictors of untruthful statements, rational conscious and emotional unconscious components of judgments, internal psychological conditions and external sociopsychological circumstances of alternative realities generation. Other areas of empirical research of the Possible are associated, in particular, with psychology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Znakov mentions the technique of "anticipatory coping" with difficult life problems to be a person's desire to avoid doubtful situations [7]. We add that signs of PTSD occur only in 14-20% of people who have experienced the influence of intensive stressors. Thus, it is possible to overcome negative effects of such stressors by person's psychological resources mobilizing [22]. In addition, nontrivial empirical phenomena of prognosis and anticipation are described as tools for the possible analyzing not only in the future, but also

in the retrospective past [53]. Undoubtedly, a deep analysis of Psychology of the Possible, carried out by Viktor Vladimirovich, will open up new methodological ways to investigate this problem, which are so needed today. The materials we have collected, obtained ourselves and briefly presented here, illuminate additionally processes of anticipation and probabilistic prognosis.

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