

BOOK REVIEW

Sergienko E. A., Ulanova A. Yu., Lebedeva E. I. Theory of Mind: Structure and Dynamics. M.: Publishing House "Institute of Psychology RAS", 2020.

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Abstract. The monograph presents the current state of the study of Theory of mind and the original experimental work of the authors aimed at studying the understanding of mental states throughout human ontogenesis, including adult and old age. New aspects in the study of the theory of mind are discussed: its evolutionary precursor, early forms of this ability, expansion of research at the later stages of ontogenesis. The problems of the architecture of Theory of mind, the correlation of implicit and explicit models, cognitive and affective components, the nature of understanding mental states and the prospects for the development of this direction are analyzed.

Keywords: Theory of Mind, architecture, dynamics, understanding of mental states, ontogenesis, evolution, early development, childhood, adulthood and the elderly

The publishing house of the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences has published a book by E.A. Sergienko, A.Yu. Ulanova, E.I. Lebedeva "Theory of mind: Structure and Dynamics". Theory of mind is as an understanding of own mental states (knowledge, intentions, desires, emotions, beliefs, etc.) and mental states of other people.

The monograph covers the history of the origin of the construct, the main approaches to the theory of mind, the results of contemporary research and original experimental research by the authors. The authors presented a holistic panorama of the theory of mind problem, covering such stages of human ontogenesis as preschool, primary school, adolescence, adult and old age.

Theory of mind is considered by the authors as one of the areas of cognitive psychology. At the

same time, from their point of view, the status of this phenomenon has a pronounced specificity.

First, the research in this case is focused on the subjective mental states of a person, which allows us to talk about the belonging of theory of mind to the post-nonclassical type of scientific research. Second, the analysis of theory of mind involves the intersection of cognitive psychology with social psychology, psycholinguistics, developmental psychology, and neurosciences. Third, the phenomenon of theory of mind can be viewed as a cognitive structure, as a research paradigm, and as a theory of development

Fourthly, the theory of mind is considered as the basis of social cognition, because the understanding and recognition of mental states are studied in the context of social interaction.

Fifth, theory of mind is studied within the framework of the author's hypothesis about its

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level development and the existence of various types of mental models. All of these aspects of the problem are presented in chapters 1-3.

This monograph proposes a fundamentally new interpretation of the theory of mind as a form of conceptualization of the inner world of a person. The phenomenology of theory of mind is presented, according to the authors, in a wide range of manifestations, such as following the gaze of another person, understanding perspective, mindreading, understanding intentions and false belief, the idea of deception, etc.

Chapter 2 provides a variety of empirical data on specific aspects of theory of mind in preschool age. In particular, it describes the understanding of the false belief, the distinction between the apparent and the real, the assessment of perspectives, the understanding of desires, preferences and emotions, the specifics of the perception of advertising by preschoolers. Chapter 3 provides an empirical evidence in favor of the interpretation of theory of mind as the mental basis of the communicative success of children. Undoubtedly, a new line is the study of the narrative abilities of children at different levels of theory of mind's development, as well as the study of children's drawing and play in the context of the peculiarities of theory of mind in preschool age.

Chapter 5 provides the features of the development of theory of mind in children of primary school and adolescence, including the understanding of emotions and the development of mental vocabulary. Of particular interest are the sections devoted to the study of factors development of theory of mind (family, language development, cultural factors). An analysis of the consequences of the development of theory of mind in adolescence (in the form of an increase of social competence, as well as manifestations of bullying and aggressive behavior) is of undoubted theoretical and practical interest.

Empirical data regarding the development of theory of mind during adulthood (in particular, understanding of deception and the ability to manipulate other people), as well as in old age (changes of theory of mind during aging, associated with changes in its cognitive and emotional components) are analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7.

This collective monograph, dedicated to a new and so far, insufficiently studied phenomenon under the collective term "theory of mind", while

undoubtedly being a large-scale and innovative work, allows us to raise some debatable questions.

First of all, the question arises whether or not theory of mind is found already in animals (starting with the birds up to the primates) and in children during the neonatal period (first 28 days) and infancy (from 1 month to 1 year). According to the authors, the ability to understand mental states can be performed on an unconscious level, starting to develop long before the development of speech and arbitrariness (executive functions?). Consequently, the ability to understand the social world cannot be attributed to the conscious level, and it is inherent in both animals and infants. This position is, in a sense, contradictory.

On the one hand, the ability to build a mental model of one's own state and the state of another person (in fact, solving the problem of dividing one's mental world with the mental world of another person) is inextricably linked with the development of symbolic functions and the simplest forms of reflection, including self-awareness. It is no coincidence that the authors study the formation of symbolic functions in preschool age as the basis for the development of theory of mind in their studies, and from the age of 3-4 years. On the other hand, it is hardly possible to talk about the presence of symbolic functions and, moreover, self-consciousness in animals (the exception, perhaps, are the higher primates, capable of the simplest forms of symbolic activity) and babies up to one year old. Similar is not always identical. For example, intelligence-like forms of behavior in animals and intelligence itself are phenomena that are different in their mechanisms. Perhaps one should distinguish between "reading of behavior" (as an earlier evolutionary biological phenomenon) versus "mindreading" (as a later socio-symbolic phenomenon).

Narrowing the scope of the concept "theory of mind" will make it possible to more clearly describe the mechanisms of this phenomenon, linking them with the formation of semiotic abilities. The latter determine the skills of using speech and constructing mental images as prerequisites for self-awareness. As the authors note, it is not surprising that recognition of oneself in the mirror, as one of the basic indicators of the development of self-awareness, occurs only about 18 months, when the child has already mastered language communication and

in his development has reached the stage of symbolic intelligence (in the form of the ability to distinguish between the designation and the designated and, therefore, perform substitution actions a real object by a sign or by any other object).

In conclusion, it should be said that the

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problem of Theory of mind posed in the monograph and the systematized base of empirical data on this research topic will be of interest to a wide range of specialists in the field of cognitive, social, educational psychology, as well as developmental psychology and personality psychology.