

Hanuza, Maria

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MARIA HANUZA

SELF – PRESERVATIVE TENDENCIES OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

1. Introduction.

The problem of the roots of human activity is one of the most significant problems in psychology. As we know, man is subject to two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, his activity is equivalent to basic existence as a human being while on the other, the strain towards stability, peace and blissful laziness is the characteristic feature of human secret dream. In order to live, however, to derive satisfaction from life, man has to be active. The importance of activity for human organism is proved by experiments on the called sensory environment (Bexton, Heron, Scott, 1963).

Human activity is manifested in the tendency towards self-development. This process, however, cannot be treated as parallel to the changes in one's behaviour. Humanistic psychology stress the importance of the need of self – fulfilment, which is indispensable to achieve psychical health and the proper development of personality.

Similar point of view is represented by theories derived from psychoanalysis, where individually directed development of personality is fundamental to its proper formation (Maslow, 1990, Dąbrowski, 1975, 1979, Jankowski, 1976).

According to these theories one shouldn't interfere with natural inclinations of a child, who is developing its own model of activity. Rapid change, as a result of social impact or individually directed alterations in behaviour, may prove destructive to a child's building up personality (Erikson, 1963).

Personality defends itself against outer interference also because of its own consciousness, which is outer the power base for future changes. How difficult it is to alter one's behaviour those, who tried to work on self-improvement, realise perfectly. Examples of difficulties in changing one's conduct are very clear in psychotherapy, where the techniques of changing one's personality are worked upon. Unfortunately, the results of psychotherapeutic influence are not

impressing and incomparable to the effort involved. (Lis-Turlejska, red. 1991, Siek, 1885, Kratochvil, 1986, Pawlik, 1981).

To man the attained experience is of a great value, which he cannot give up easily, Just because it is integrated into his unique system of personality, which defends itself against disintegration.

The pace of changes and their range depend also on individual features of a man. Liability to social impact is variable. Conformists seem to be more prone to changing their behaviour than people who are autonomous individuals (Ronson, 1987). Research on stereotypes and prejudices leads at least partially, to the fundamentals of such differentiation. Knowledge connected with great emotions, which was worked out in the changes in one's behaviour are being blocked (Chlewiński, Kurcz, 1992).

Liability to social impacts has also its cultural roots. It was proved that within the American population an independent conception of Ego is present whereas the Japanese inter-dependent idea of Ego. (Markus, Kitayama, 1991).

The change in behaviour is also connected with creativity. Creative individuals show increasing tendencies to altering their conduct. Artistic „production“ may come into being as an effect of self-fulfilment and of positive emotions which accompany this process. (Maslow, 1991). Creators seem also to act under the Influence of negative emotions whose source can most frequently be traced to the personality conflict.

Changes in behaviour are also conditioned by the individual process of self-development. Psychology of development holds that the tendency to change one's behaviour is modified by age. Children are prone to change their behaviour very rapidly so that one can expect that preservative qualities are not likely to appear in them. It is misleading on the other hand we can trace these tendencies at very young age. The second and the third year of a child's life is the age of building up an autonomy (Erikson, 1963) or the age of acting to splite (Hurlock, 1060). In his period of growing up, a child tries to defers its own individually derected model of behaviour and its own structure of personality in the process of creation.

The analysis of children's behaviour in kindergarten further validation of hypothesis on preservative tendencies embedded in human nature.

2. Nursery school children's behaviour under divergence of information.

Experimental tests were made on the nursery school's children, to check their behaviour under the divergence in the information flow.

The theoretical base was taken from the cognitive conception in the psychology. This conception the integral relation between man's activities concerns and the process of the information interaction which coded in the cognitive structure and related to the information deriving from the individual's environment (Mc V Hunt, 1964, 1965, Berlyne, 1969, Łukaszewski 1970, 1971, 1974, 1976).

W. Łukaszewski's theory of the information divergence was set up on the basis of other theories: theory of motivation conception and adaptation produced L. Festinger, and theory of inner motivation by J. Nuttin, and D.O. Hebb's theory. The basic the assumption of W. Łukaszewski's theory is the hypothesis that: „the appearance as divergence between two systems of information, concerning the same state of thing, makes a base for many activities (Łukaszewski, 1970). Information is understood here as a message with a definite meaning. The above quoted argument can be expressed by the following formula:

$$M = \frac{I_1}{I_2}$$

Where M stands for motivation $\frac{I_1}{I_2}$ quantity relation two information sources.

W. Łukaszewski assumes that the base of the divergences in the information form, comes from divergences between the coming information and the coded ones. Any others form of divergences, e.g. the divergences between the coming pieces of information only, can be reduced to the same form of differences. The reduction of the information divergence, can carried through:

1. Changing the system of the coming information,
2. Changing the system of the coded information,
3. Partially changes introduced within the two systems of information

The increase in the divergence is connected with the growth of the negative emotional state. Therefore the above the activities oriented on reducing informational divergences refer to the medium level of informational divergence. Small and great divergence evoke no activities.

Some theoretical aspects of the research were taken from J. Piaget's theory, particularly those concerning the process of equipallence, assimilation and accommodation. (Piaget, 1966).

Inspiring were also the findings of D.E. Berlyne who discovered that the motivational value of conflict increases with the children's age. (Berlyne, 1969). According to the presented theory, we can make following working hypotheses.

Hypothesis I

In case when the child observes divergence in the information, he acts to eliminate divergence.

Hypothesis II

The effect of eliminating divergence in the information will be consolidation of reaction leading to reduction of the information divergence.

Hypothesis III

Frequency of removal of informational divergence will increase with the child's age.

Hypothesis IV

In case of impossibility to eliminate the divergence between the coming information and the coded model through changes in the coming information, there is a tendency to coordinate both systems of information by means of changing the model.

Hypothesis V

In situation of informational divergence the activities oriented on the change of the coded model will be preceded by activities oriented on introducing in coming information.

3. The Method of Investigation

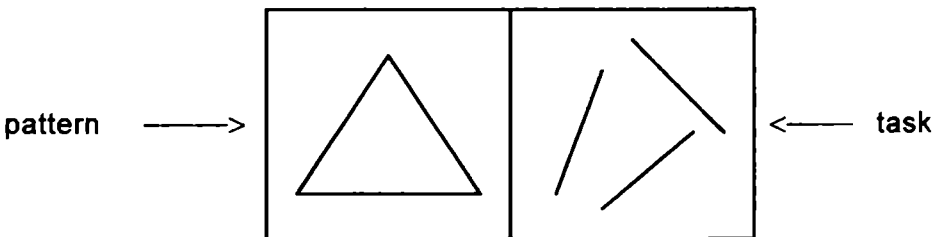
Individual experimental method were used in the investigations. Examined were 1200 children aged 3–8, with 200 children in each age group, chosen at random. Experiments were carried on in the Wrocław kindergartens by the author of the present work.

To verify the hypotheses of this investigations, 4 experimental situations were used marked respectively by the symbols A, B, C and K. These were practical tests.

3.1 Situation A

The examine the stimulus situation the children were shown two arrangements of systems of sticks. The sticks were putt on board, which was divided into 2 parts, as shown in Fig.1.

Fig. 1



On the left side of the board, the sticks were arranged in special pattern, we called the pattern W. On the right side the same number of sticks was scattered without order, marked as Z. Board parameters length: long – 4 cm, width – 17 cm, frame – 1 cm, sticks length – 8.5 cm and 4.5 cm. The board colour – green, division barrier – white, sticks colour – red.

For the first two minutes, when the exposition was ready, no instructions were given. Then after two minutes, when the child didn't move the sticks,

we told him „You can move them if you like“. In the investigations where ten stimulus situations were applied. Geometrical shapes, as well as simple arrangement were used as patterns which as results from S. Szuman's have been known to the children of 3 – 8 (Szuman, 1968).

For each arrangement system a group of 60 children had been examined. Each group consisted of 10 children of the same age, with preserving equal proportions of the same age of boys and girls. The main group consisted of 600 children. Every child was examined only in one stimulus situation.

All changes in arrangement of the sticks and all responses a child were recorded. The experiment was ended when the child started repeating the same arrangements or 2 minutes after a child stopped acting.

3.2. Situation B

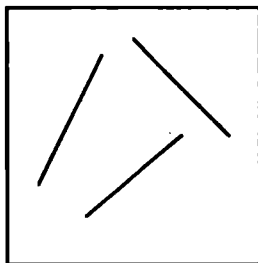
Situation B was a kind of supplement to situation A. This situation was introduced only for those children who did not arrange the sticks in situation A to according to the given pattern but were not quite inactive children. For them, a stimulus arrangement was given like in situation A, but this time the sticks of the pattern were fastened to the board and the child could move only the sticks of the task.

Situation B introduced to the children were thus compelled to be more restricted by an outer stimuli arrangement than they had in situation A, where they could freely rearrange sticks both in pattern and in task areas.

3.3. Situation K

To determine the range influence of the pattern, on the children's execution of the task in situation A and B, a control situation K, was introduced to test other 600 children. The children were given only one task, like that in situation A but without a pattern. The example of this situation is shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2



The experimenter's activities at the beginning of the experiment were the same as in experimental situation.

After finishing investigation in the situation A, B and K, where the children's activities resulted in the same arrangements of the pattern and task, the arrangements were destroyed and the children were told to „arrange the sticks as you did it a while ago“. Thus we have tested whether the find investigation arrangement was consolidated.

3.4. Situation C

In this situation the test was made only for those children who were able to correct the information divergence between the pattern and the task in situation A and B, and who managed to remove the divergence between the pattern and the task, and performed a positive attempt at consolidating the coded model.

In this situation the children had the same stimulus arrangements as situation A and B. The only difference was that this time it was, the task that was fastened to the board.

4. Results of experiments and discussion

4.1. Children reaction to the divergence of information

In the experimental situation A 343 children out of 600 tested worked out the suppression of informational divergence between task and the pattern.

In addition to this situation to this B led 45 children to settle mutual correspondence between the pattern and the task. The results of the situation A and B are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

REACTIONS SITUATIONS	REACTION REMOVING INFORMATION DIVERGENCE		OTHER REACTIONS		Σ
	THE NUMBER of CHILDREN	PER CENT	THE NUMBER of CHILDREN	PER CENT	
A	343	57.2	257	42.8	600
B	45	24.5	139	75.5	184
A+B	388	64.7	212	35.3	600

The analysis of children's reaction to the divergence of information in situation A and B proved that 64.7% of the total number of tested children have eliminated the divergence of information, the left 35.3 % followed other patterns or

were reluctant to take up any remaining activity proposed by experimental situations.

Comparison of children's reaction's in control situation K and in experimental situations A and B is depicted in Table 2

Table 2

REACTIONS SITUATIONS	THE NUMBER of CHILDREN			PER CENT	
	A+B	K	Σ	A+B	K
REACTION REMOVING INFORMATION DIVERGENCE	388	212	600	64.7	35.3
OTHER REACTIONS AND NO – ACTIVITY	212	388	600	35.3	64.7
TOGETHER	600	600	1200	100.0	100.0
$\text{Chi}^2=103.25; p<0.001; \text{df} = 1$					

It result from Table 2 that children who belonged to experimental group are more liable to perform their reaction's task with pattern than the children from the control group K. This confirms the method as reasonable, adequacy of applied method.

The results of experiments obtained in situations A, B and K have confirmed hypothesis I. It turned out that statistically significant majority of tested children undertook the activity to remove the divergence in information.

4.2. Consolidation of reaction reducing the divergence in information

Research on consolidation of the reaction was checked on children who in situation A and B reduced the divergence in information and on children who followed patterns other than those assumed by the experimenter.

In the group of 388 children, who removed the divergence by co-ordinating the pattern with the task, the reaction was consolidated in 331 children which makes 85.3 % of the tested group.

Within the group of 139 children (performing other schemes assumed) 122 (87.8%) of them have also consolidated their reactions by arranging the sample according to their own ideas. These results have confirmed hypothesis II.

4.3. Developing of the reaction towards the informational divergence.

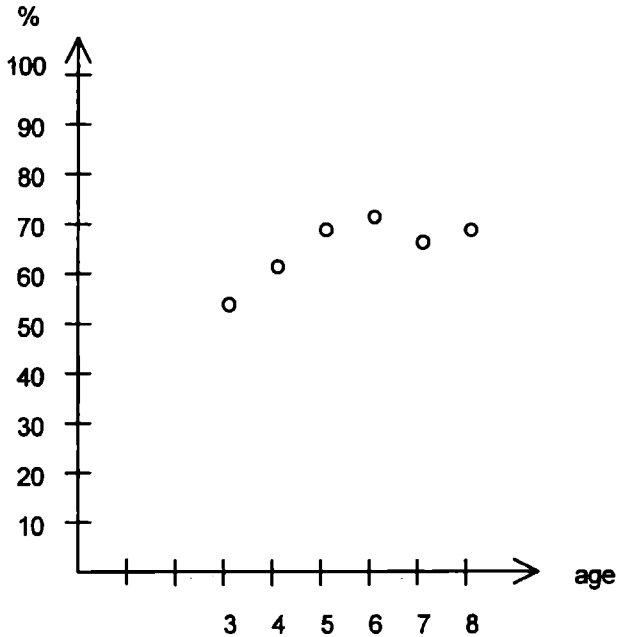
Children reactions to the informational divergence were analysed in dependence of their age. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

AGE							
REACTIONS SITUATIONS	3	4	5	6	7	8	Σ
SITUATION A	43	50	63	63	62	62	343 (57,1%)
SITUATION A+B	53	61	68	70	67	69	388 (64,7%)

The results of investigations were presented in Fig. 3

Fig. 3



The curve which represents the developments of child's reaction towards informational divergence is markedly rising, reaching the maximum function point for children who are five or six years old. The results points to hypothesis III as well-assumed. More over, they correspond with J. Piaget's (Piaget, 1967) and L. Wygotski's (Wygotski, 1971) research which maintains that in the age from six to seven years, changes occurred in relation between the process children thinking is also rapidly increasing.

4.4. The change interaction towards the informational divergence

This refers to the population of 331 children, who after having suppressed the divergence between the pattern and the task in situation A and B, showed the persistence in reaction which led to the suppression.

In the experimental situation C, only 121 of the children (i.e. 36.6%) changed their reaction of removing informational divergence by co-ordination the pattern scheme and the scheme of the task.

However majority of children 165 (49.5%) of them having performed a number of attempts at rearranging the fastened task, have left the pattern unmoved.

Although Hypothesis IV was confirmed only partially, the achieved results are the proof of self – preservative tendencies showed by children in the kindergarten age.

Other conformations are provided by the analysis of children's activity in experimental situation C, before the change in reaction towards informational divergence. It was proved that from the total number of 121 children, who changed their reaction of removing informational divergence, 106 (i.e. 87.6%) children performed activities directed to preserve the reaction of reducing informational divergence. This confirms Hypothesis V.

The achieved results, which concern the change in reactions consolidated before, negate, to a certain degree, the conviction that a child's psyche is extremely flexible. Changes in a child's behaviour involve the process of assimilation rather than of accommodation. Children have difficulties in changing once consolidated models of behaviour. These conclusions should be taken into account by its parents in the process of bringing up a child in order to prevent a child from creating improper, the point of view of social adaptability, cognitive schemes, which are very difficult to change.

Conducted experiments, which concerned a very simple perceptual situation, inducted to the considerable inertia in process of altering one's behaviour. It can be anticipated that changes in more complicated personality structures will be much more difficult to carry out.

Human nature tends to conservatism, which is probably connected with defending one's personality structure against disintegration. (Dąbrowski, 1979).

The research on the process of self – realisation shows, however that to derive satisfaction from our lives we need to develop our personality which means its constant transformation.

We should overcome difficulties connected with conservative tendencies of our cognitive system, to create better changes for the development of our personality

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SELF - PRESERVATIVE TENDENCIES OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

The main thesis of the paper, concerning with the self-preservative tendencies of a human being has been experimentally verified. The possible behavioural changes in the behaviour of childrens at kindergartens and early school age were tested in situations of the divergence of information. As many as 12000 children were individually examined in experimental conditions. The results of the experiment have supported the thesis of this work about the limited possibilities the behavioural changes. At the same time these results have also confirmed the investigative hypothesis. The results are important for the process the up bringing process and offered some options connected with the proper development of human personality.

Key words: self-preservative tendencies – personality – child

