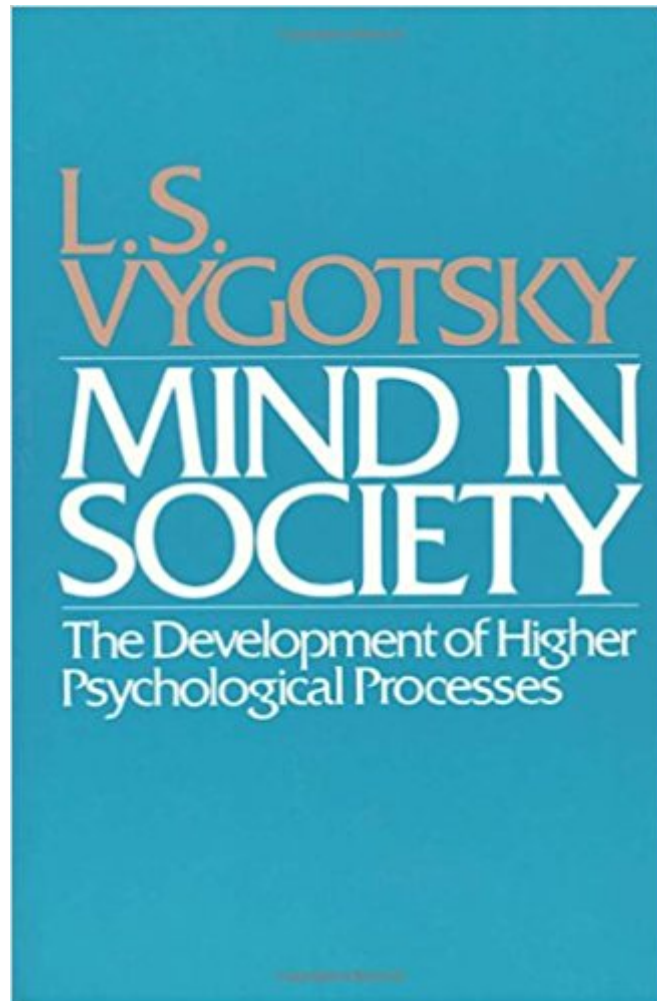


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# Mind In Society: The Development Of Higher Psychological Processes



## Synopsis

The great Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky has long been recognized as a pioneer in developmental psychology. But somewhat ironically, his theory of development has never been well understood in the West. *Mind in Society* should correct much of this misunderstanding. Carefully edited by a group of outstanding Vygotsky scholars, the book presents a unique selection of Vygotsky's important essays, most of which have previously been unavailable in English. The Vygotsky who emerges from these pages can no longer be glibly included among the neobehaviorists. In these essays he outlines a dialectical-materialist theory of cognitive development that anticipates much recent work in American social science. The mind, Vygotsky argues, cannot be understood in isolation from the surrounding society. Man is the only animal who uses tools to alter his own inner world as well as the world around him. From the handkerchief knotted as a simple mnemonic device to the complexities of symbolic language, society provides the individual with technology that can be used to shape the private processes of mind. In *Mind in Society* Vygotsky applies this theoretical framework to the development of perception, attention, memory, language, and play, and he examines its implications for education. The result is a remarkably interesting book that is bound to renew Vygotsky's relevance to modern psychological thought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the earliest and still one of the best introductions to socio-historical psychology, the study of how individual human intelligence develops in interaction with people and the environment.

In concert with many contemporary approaches in cognitive science today, Lev Vygotsky, A.R. Luria and A.N. Leontiev argued that human intelligence is characteristically mediated through objects and social activity. Humans think through tools. Talking to oneself, for example, is not an irrelevant activity. Putting one's actions into speech is a way of focusing one's consciousness on the problem. This kind of speech is not pointless, but rather a cognitive tool that gives one a greater awareness of one's own actions and makes it easier to modify these actions--a point that Vygotsky proved with research on how children solved problems. Much of human activity involves making use of tools, signs, and activities, the kinetic melodies of action and conceptualization that make us smart, and through which we are able to accomplish the uniquely human feats of complex intellectual action. This is an excellent place to begin studying Vygotsky and activity theory. If you like this you will also like A.R. Luria's *\*The Making of Mind\**, and the classics *\*The Man With A Shattered World\** and *\*The Mind of a Mnemonist\**, the books that inspired Oliver Sacks' writing.

This reissue of a 1978 reprint is supposedly a collection of Russian psychologist Vygotsky's essays (he died in 1934) as translated from the Russian by A.R. Luria, one of his students. The "editors" claim that after a cursory study of Luria's translations "we came to believe that the image of Vygotsky as a sort of early neobehaviorist of cognitive development - an impression held by many of our colleagues- was strongly belied by these two works." Nice. A cursory study is able to strong belie widely held impressions that are based on decades of studying Vygotsky's own 1934 book *Thought and Language*, among his other works. One has to wonder at the degree to which revisionism is taking place when the editors state in the preface: "In putting separate essays together we have taken significant liberties. The reader will encounter here not a literal translation of Vygotsky but rather our edited translation of Vygotsky from which we have omitted material that seemed redundant and to which we have added material that seemed to make his points clearer." Hmmmm. Will the real Vygotsky please stand up! Save your money and first get Kozulin's version of *"Thought and Language."* One must question the amount of trustworthy scholarship in *"Mind in Society."*

This book is very interesting and was somehow a mind opener for me. The book gives a good overview of the different approaches to the learning process which were available and discussed at the time. He explains the child's development not as simply a Newtonian deterministic process, but as mental and psychological processes in motion and change where the outcome often became different what had been predicted. It is amazing that Vygotsky could come up with these new and

visionary ideas in Stalin's Sovjet!

Vygotsky's *Mind in Society* is a book that will never be outdated. The insights that Vygotsky describe can be applied nowadays in the classrooms.

For people studying education, this book is essential. It is much more accessible than Piaget's works, and has so much relevance to the classroom because of Vygotsky's focus on language, and learning as a social experience. Dewey's *Experience & Education* is another personal favorite.

Vygotsky's views on psychological development are very interesting and although his language can be a little dry it's very engaging.

While the book is full of theory that might discourage someone from reading it, it has an absolutely fantastic practical implication worth the effort! The second half of this book, "Educational Implications" discusses the Zone of Proximal Development. Learning about this "Zone" plus the discussion regarding how children learn to read and write, tells those of us who really want to help children learn, ways to set-up an environment and activities to do it!! Don't let the theory scare you away, this is a **MUST READ!**

This was a great book for understanding Vygotsky in relation to other theorists. Vygotsky is by far my favorite theorist.

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