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ЦИЗКОП СИ РАН

Russian Academy of Sciences
Sociological Institute
Research Center for
Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones



Herzen State Pedagogical
University of Russia
Institute of Human Philosophy



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International Scientific Colloquium

NARRATIVE REGIMES. WHO IS TALKING?

October 10, 2020

10-00 – 17-00

Colloquium will be organized as a part of the *6th International Research Conference Mechanisms for Formation of Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones (CEFZ)-2020*

**(Institute of Human Philosophy
Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia
address: Malaya Posadskaya, 26, aud. 101)
and ZOOM**

registration for remote participants:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZlodu6vqDwsGdxBqKqDvUkiJsSTsk6sxvuV>

The colloquium is held as a part of a research project of Russian Foundation for Basic Research 18-011-00570 A «Theory of cultural trauma: individual traumatic experience and experience of historical catastrophes»

Saint Petersburg
2020

Valeria Dudinets (St. Petersburg State University, Russia) **“Who has the right?” - The clash of generations in the interpretation of German cultural trauma**

Svetlana Nikonova (Saint Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Russia) **“Nothing with Consequences”: Traumatic Narrative and Deconstruction**

Anna Novikova (Saint Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences, St. Petersburg State University, Russia) **Music as a Traumatic Narrative of the Subject’s Deployment in the Modernity: Being Through Non-Being**

16-30 – 17-00 Discussion

SUMMARIES

Alexander Brodsky

Social mythology and its therapeutic goals

The paper analyzes the mechanisms for the formation of social myths as well as their functions pertaining to collective traumas. The author postulates two premises. According to the first, a particular text becomes a myth not because of its formal or substantive properties, but as a result of its perception and interpretation of individual statements composing it. Anything can be a myth. Usually, a myth consists of descriptions, propositions, and explanations, that is descriptive statements. However, to understand myth is to know not the conditions of truth and falsity of the statements composing it, but the conditions for the abiding by certain rules of conduct. While being a description, myth is understood as a prescription. Such an approach allows us to understand how various historical narratives or scientific theories, originally aiming at the description and explanation of the world, are turning into myths determining the social behavior of the masses.

According to the second premise, the transformation of a description or explanation of a traumatic event into imperatives is an essential form of therapy for the collective consciousness. In fact, to describe a traumatic event and turn this description into the demand for action and construction of a new reality is the only way to get rid of the destructive consequences of psychological trauma on both a collective and individual level.

However, the main problem that the author tries at least postulate (if not to solve) in his paper is to explain the mechanisms for redesigning the interpretation of statements and to expose the methods allowing to transform statements aiming to “bring words into line with the world” into statements aiming to “bring the world into line with the words describing it”.

The research was conducted within the framework of the research project № 18-011-00570A with the financial support of the RFBR

Sergey Troitskiy

"Forward to the bright past!"

The report is devoted to the problem of the excluded past and the related problem of traumatic nostalgia. The eternal return to the moment of injury (trauma). The past in this perspective appears as an eternal ideal. Traumatic factors are subject to psychological substitution. The report offers an interpretation of the past from the point of view of speaking, i.e. tools for constructing this past.

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Alexander Ovchinnikov

Urbanisation and constructs of ethnonational histories: an aspect of "frontier trauma"

"Frontier trauma" refers to a complex of psychological experiences caused by territorial movements and changes in social status that is expressed in the features of social behavior. The object of the research is the community of authors of regional ethnonational histories of Tatarstan (mainly "histories of the Tatar people"), the subject is the "traumatic component" of the content of the narratives they construct. Based on the materials of sociological research and memoir data, it is concluded that the important role of the urban processes of the Soviet and post-Soviet times in recruiting new members to the local academic community. Forced development of a new and "alien" urban space, loss of the previous social status and significant efforts to acquire another, became a serious traumatic experience for a citizen in the first generation – "frontier trauma". A form of psychological protection could be elements of professional activity of historians, other humanitarians and cultural figures to construct narratives about the past of their people. These narratives (usually referred to the "difficult history of interaction between ethnic groups") metaphorically reflected the realities of current social relations, when one social group (former villagers) tried to "gain a foothold" among other urban segments of the population. Thus, we can state an interesting process of transition of personal psychological "frontier trauma" into historical, and subsequent public manifestation of the latter, since the content of ethnonational history was an important part of national identity and state (in this case, regional, Tatarstan) ideology. The encouraged actualization of historical traumas could also lead to the opposite process – the transition of historical ("imaginary") trauma into a personal one, which becomes part of the worldview of an already "indigenous" urban resident (mainly young people). A typical example of "frontier trauma" is functioning in the texts on the "history of the Tatar people" image of capture of Kazan by the troops of Ivan IV the Terrible in 1552. This date is a "turning point" for the entire narrative, in fact, it serves as a marker for marking the turn of the "Golden age". The image of 1552 is updated in the regional academic turn and current politics. The events of more than 460 years ago could serve a former villager, now a student of the Humanities or a professional historian, as a deeply personal quasi-explanation of their own unstable social status and the difficulties experienced during the first years of life in the city (in particular, in Kazan).

The report was prepared with the support of the RFBR, project No. 18-011-00658 "traumas of historical memory in a network society: media representations, social risks and detraumatization strategies»

Natalia Artemenko

Memory and forgetfulness: narrative gaps

Remembering is so closely linked to forgetting that together they determine the rhythms of our consciousness. The memory gains its significance by overcoming the time interval associated with the phase of absent consciousness. The memory returned from oblivion can be supplemented with new details, the nature of which can be either quite realistic (referring to forgotten, but really existing details), or fantastical (in places of failures memory can complete the plot using fictional details). Forgetfulness can be both preserving (latent memory) and associated with loss (A. Assman writes about the seven forms of forgetfulness). The subject of our research will be the space "between" memory and oblivion, their intersections and intersections, which are reflected in narratives of different levels. Narrative is always a complex interweaving of experiences and documentation, individual and collective experience, it is not always the representation, and most of all – construction, but the epistemological value of narrative is not diminished because any construction is a representation of a different order, demonstrating the mechanisms of construction..

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Ksenia Kapelchuk

Historical trauma in the context of biopolitics

The concept of trauma as an experience that essentially cannot be experienced, that escapes representation, but which at the same time can be captured only through traces in the way it is represented, is deeply paradoxical. Interpretations of historical trauma are located between two extreme poles: on the one hand, theories that insist on the unrepresentability of trauma and in some sense its sublimity, on the other, theories that reduce trauma to mechanisms of representation. Studies of historical trauma, as a field of intersection of a number of research strategies, are inscribed in the landscape of modern social analytics dealing with the phenomenon of biopolitics in a peculiar way. They are connected through the concept of victim. The discourse of biopolitics includes as its necessary element the idea of an innocent and passive victim: the control mechanisms embedded in the body of society get their justification by referring to the victim – real or potential – who needs to be protected from some kind of danger. While protecting the victim biopolitics constructs it. Giorgio Agamben describes the figure of homo sacer as the constantly excluded, but repeatedly reproduced element that appears today in the form of "naked life". In this context the duality of understanding trauma finds its justification through cohesion with the logic of functioning of biopolitics and at the same time provides a key to understanding its mechanisms

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Alexey Smirnov

Frontier of cultural memory: disassociating narratives

Traumatic experiences narratives are confidently penetrate in contemporary cultural memory and memorial culture. Memorial policy uses these narratives to form or improve national and state identities. Due to the influence of the media and the Internet on the nature of commemorative practices, memorial politics got the opportunity to influence memorial culture, which can be considered as a space of cultural memory and its representations. Cultural memory is heterogeneous, there are areas in it that do not quite fit into the current memorial policy of a community or state. In this case, some areas of cultural memory are expelled “to the borders” of the memorial landscape, because they are not able to contribute to solving the urgent tasks of memorial politics, and sometimes they directly oppose them.

Any political process needs to manage the balance of interests of political actors, which also applies to memorial politics. Accordingly, some fragments of cultural memory, including narratives that take out the traumatic experience of the past from oblivion, can affect the social balance. The implantation of these narratives into the memorial culture leads to the formation of tension points in it that threaten its sustainable existence. At difficult moments in the development of some countries or regions, “memorial tensions” lead to the so-called “memory wars,” in which elements of memorial culture are also used. The possibility of the growth of “memorial tension” increases not only with the development of media, but also with the advent of global or transnational social structures that form a new memorial culture and memorial policy. The report discusses examples of such narratives, the role of which, constructive or destructive, proved to be important in shaping the modern cultural landscape.

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Alexey Sidorov

Cultural trauma in cinematic narrative

The concept of cultural trauma in the modern civilization of the images (the “videosphere”, as defined by the R. Debray) with a predominance of the visual environment, is closely connected with the iconographic depiction of catastrophic events and their narrativization in the cinema. Films not only help bridge the gap between individual suffering and social consciousness by showing fictional or documentary shocking images to a wide audience, but also help to spread narratives which influence whether individuals, community groups, or society as a whole regard themselves as traumatized. As Jeffrey C. Alexander pointed out, cultural traumas are not something natural, but are retroactively constituted by society through public reflection and discourses in which media representations, including films, play a leading role. In the gap

between the event and its representation, called the “trauma process”, there is a struggle for meaning that defines pain, sacrifice and responsibility and re-creates collective memory and identity. The theory of cultural trauma should include an analysis of the aesthetic, narrative, dramaturgical and diegetic functions of cinema language, which provide an opportunity to study and embodiment personal and collective traumatic experience..

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Valeria Dudinets

“Who has the right?” - The clash of generations in the interpretation of German cultural trauma

The term of trauma is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to give an accurate theoretical framework, since the study of the phenomenon of trauma involves simultaneously analyzing a large number of other theoretical aspects. Today one of the most complex and relevant aspects theory of trauma is the issue of interpreting of trauma. Despite the fact that there are a fairly large number of scientific papers about theory of trauma, in most of them the question of interpretation often remains unresolved. One of the main problems is the inconsistency of the theses put forward in the research literature. Often the thesis of one author is the exact opposite of the thesis of another. An analysis of the “practical” application of the theory of trauma can bring a moment of clarity on the interpretation of trauma than an analysis of the theory of trauma. This report discusses the stages of formation and development of the interpretation of trauma on the example of German trauma of the twentieth century. Of course, emphasizing the theory with only one example partially simplifies and deprives the report of theoretical completeness. However, this solution helps to put in the center of the research not the theory of trauma, but an analysis of the practice of articulation trauma and its interpretation in a single culture. At the same time, the analysis of German trauma is still interesting in that an important role in pronouncing trauma was played by a generational conflict - a generation, direct participants in the events that led to the trauma, and a generation that did not have the traumatic experience. It was the conflict that actualized the problem of the right to articulation injury in German culture.

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Svetlana Nikonova

“Nothing with Consequences”: Traumatic Narrative and Deconstruction

Psychoanalyst Alenka Zupančič tells us curiously about sexuality, which, in the first place, is defined by psychoanalysis as fundamentally traumatic. She states that psychoanalysis is not a science of sexuality and it does not tell us what sex really is, but he tells us that there is no “reality” for sex. But this non-existence is not the same nonexistence as non-existence of something like a unicorn. This non-existence is real, - she tells. - and it leaves real traces. This is a vacuum that is captured in real. This is

nothing, or negativity, with consequences (quoted from: A. Zupančič. *Sex and Being*. St. Petersburg, 2019, p. 58, (in Russian)). That means that the center of the traumatic experience is defined here as nothing, but nothing with consequences. What could be the best definition of trauma and especially cultural trauma related to the structure of human subjectivity, manifesting itself in significant mental shifts? Who speaks in a traumatic experience? In the case of an individual traumatic experience in a cultural context, we can at least hope to work with specific people and their speech. But dealing with cultural trauma, nothing is revealed before us, but nothing with consequences. Individual speech more likely appears as a consequence, a manifestation of the original break that controls it. It has already been restructured by this break. It is a symptom of trauma, a consequence of trauma, but there is no trauma in it, and trauma is not expressed by it. Individual speech – speech defined by a traumatic fracture, which in itself is unknown. We assume that deconstruction is a practice born by self-understanding of the cultural trauma of modernity, aimed at manifesting that nothing that governs also, in particular, its own possibility as a symptom of trauma.

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Anna Novikova

Music as a Traumatic Narrative of the Subject's Deployment in the Modernity: Being Through Non-Being

In the report, music is considered as a specific narrative regulating the process of human self-expression, within which it is realized as a subject. The starting point is the analysis of romantic music performed by S. Žižek and his conclusion about its key role in shaping the essence of the subject. Developing Žižek's thesis about music as a "noumenal" stream that goes beyond the boundaries of linguistic significance, we will try to demonstrate the traumatism of this output outside. Musical fabric, turning from an end in itself into an organizing principle, creates a space within which the subject unfolds, presenting itself to himself. This principle acts as a narrative, producing not the subject as a result, but the very possibility of the existence of the subject. The production of an opportunity not supported by the unconditionedness of one's own realization is traumatic. Žižek speaks of the "essence of the subject," while we dwell on this process in more detail, we prefer to designate it as the "potency of the subject," which paradoxically turns out to be the only way of being, being at the same time a form of non-existence. Existing in the space of opportunity, the subject of modernity demonstrates the inevitability of the traumatic nature of their own foundations. Thus, romantic music, turning from a work into a narrative of the formation of the subject's capabilities, repeats the fate of the modernist subject, who also levels out his own essence in order to appear as a gap highlighting the traumatic nature of absence.

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