

## *Original Paper*

# Axiology and Teleology of Theoretical Work (on the Occasion of the Seventieth Birthday of Boris Rodoman)

Aleksandr Levintov Ph.D.<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (Geography), Moscow City University, Moscow, Russia

\* Aleksandr Levintov Ph.D., (Geography), Moscow City University, Moscow, Russia

Received: April 20, 2021

Accepted: April 30, 2021

Online Published: May 4, 2021

doi:10.22158/ibes.v3n2p85

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/ibes.v3n2p85>

### ***Abstract***

*The article discusses the most important principles of theoretical work, the etymology of the origin of the concept “theory”, examines the relevance of theoretical and historical approaches, presents the main constructs of theoretical work: model, concept, method. Theory can act as a hermeneutical tool. It is argued that if a theory does not cause an ontological shock, then it is insufficient. The reflexivity of any theoretical work is emphasized.*

### ***Keywords***

*theory, model, concept, method, reflection, strategy, marketing and management of scientific activity*

This article refers mainly to the experience of theoretical work in geography and is particularly interesting to geographers, however, some issues are beyond the scope of this science and that’s why may catch the interest of another segment of readers.

## **1. Principles of Theoretical Work**

Theoretical work is generated by the deficiency, sometimes intentional and deliberate deficiency, of practice, dissatisfaction with or non-recognition, rejection of reality, or sometimes by being rejected by reality, left behind without any life ring, life jacket and a stupid shark scaring whistle. This whistle will frighten them, what a hope! Who can theorize better than an outcast driven out of “our combat zone”? Expulsion and self-expulsion are usually an act of mutual contempt: “Bite the ice!”—“I had no wish either!” And this contempt is strengthened at both sides by grievance, regret and concealed fiendish delight: we’ll see how you will get by without us. Unfortunately for practitioners and fortunately for expelled theorists, the latter may live in their proud solitude while “Titanics” who got rid of them very often find their icebergs in the fog of reality.

Theory comes in parallel with history. As M. Weber [9] said that those, who feel insufficiency of theoretical knowledge, grind away at history studies while those who lack knowledge on history turn to the theory. A theorist begins to distort history in accordance with his theoretical scheme, and a historian—to disprove and subvert theoretical structures using historical examples and facts. We, however, staying at the side of their work (= reading and listening), we see that a theorist and a historian together build a structure that is far from reality and empirics and may not be disproved by this reality and empirics. They both do what makes them and us say “but the fact is”. A historian and a theorist are interpreters of reality, each in their own way. They both act as its norm setters and set various norms which sometimes appear to be incompatible with it and with each other. That’s why we in our crazy real life usually think they are crazy freaks, crackpots. And this is a tragedy of position and life of a theorist and a historian.

So, the principal position of a theorist is in relations with empirics and historians. Theorists see the practice as manure and historians as competitors.

A syntagm, constitutive frame of theory is a model, i.e., some abstract structure, ideal object having nothing or almost nothing in common with reality (for example, Galilei’s ideal object without shape, friction, material, volume, having only a sense or parameter of free fall), fundamental assumption (Prolemy’s assumption: “Let us assume that the Sun and stars revolve around the Earth”, or a counter assumption of Copernicus and Bruno) or reduction. Formally, some models are reductions and ideal objects at the same time (for example, as provided by Galilei [2] because he consequently rejected characteristics and properties of matter until one characteristic left). However, there are also non-reductive models, such as analogous: V. Lefebvre’s cosmic subject [5] as analogue of a thermodynamic machine; a planetary model of the atom designed by N. Bohr which is analogous too.

Modelling is the most mysterious and intimate part of theoretical work: the intimacy and secrecy are attributable to our skeletons so that we show them only after death and only after a while.

A model is overgrown with a paradigm in the course of theoretical work: with body, organism and individuality.

The body means a scientific concept, the organism—ways and methods of solving issues and problems, and the individuality is reflection of own model, concept and method holding all these in the unity and consistency. These four images of theory determine its self-sustainability and inherent value.

A concept is not just a view system, this is a practice generating structure, somewhat a mechanism and a tool for generating practice (in Plato’s interpretation of practice as beneficence), and a concept is a pre-project of future activity which has no targets yet, but already axiologically stable and limited with value-based prohibitions and, most importantly, carrying the embryo of future activity, conception, as indeed in the beginning was the Word and only then its presentation and implementation.

If the concept is responsible for meaning (“what?”), the method answers the question “how?”.

The method as a path is formed a posteriori and in this sense it is a priori unknown to us. Before starting to work, we are free to choose a manner of work but not a method. And unless we perform

reflexive, normalizing monitoring of our actions we are not able to define the method itself which method is, therefore, is not just a path and roaming but the path that we normalize (and so axiologically evaluate). B. Rodoman often says and repeats: "Point A and point B make no difference in a travel, moreover, they almost always match in terms of space. It's the very process of travel reflected by us but not performed distractedly in drinking, sleeping, reading of information and otherwise behind the scene of consciousness, that is important."

Unlike a manner replicated when necessary, a method is individual and unique. A teacher, head of school is methodically lonely. Uniqueness is not only some merit. This is also a burden of loneliness and lack of understanding. Like a skier making a track, a leader of scientific school always stays alone and he should not hope that his followers replicate his method: they just move at his ski track, they do not make it.

So, it necessarily follows from the above that a paradigm structure of a theory is the reflection of the second order (relatively to the syntagm, it is tertiary relatively to modelling, for example, and is on the higher level with respect to the modelled reality), because a model, method and concept included in it are themselves the products of reflection.

### *1.1 Doctrinal Principle*

Many years ago, during defence of one remarkably weak doctoral thesis in the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences it was found that the respected author of thesis changed his opinion on beet sowing in the North Caucasus several times in chronological accordance with resolutions and decrees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. It was his sole principal position. Moreover, it was a doctrinal principle that related not only to beet sowing in the North Caucasus, not only to the North Caucasus and not only beet sowing: in the long run, it is not necessary to know such details for a Soviet doctor of philosophy in geography.

As a rule, a doctrinal principle of a theorist is following the truth. But not the truth itself. The term "theory" first appeared in Athens in the times of Pericles [6]. The great strategos called by this name a holiday box office to give tickets for theatrical performance to the poor for free. Pericles who contempered aristocrats for spoiling people with gifts and freeloader and granted civil and military jobs instead of alms, none the less opened a theory believing, perhaps, that means of living could not be more important than the living itself and existence of the truth in it. A cognate word of theory is theatre, a performance reflecting the beingness up to its essence.

Here we should make a difference between beingness and existence. The verb "to be" is presented in this root form in all tenses, including the infinitive, except for present simple: I am, you are, he/she/it is, we are, you are, they are. The Russian language does not have a perfect form in present tense and at the same time the verb "to be" in this tense is single-rooted with the truth, with the substance. The real truth, the truth in present tense, is imperfect. We are always on the move to it. Existence is beingness on the move to the truth. In this context, existence is perfect if it is a normalized path, a path that is made in reflection of this path, a methodic path. That's what is called existentialism in the European

philosophy and what is opposed to the mere “to be”, beingness. Hegel in his Science of Logic states that reflection appearing between a list of notions and beingness and connecting them, makes such beingness an existence, essential beingness. M. Heidegger’s Dasein [3] is opposed to Sein through reflexive, thinking presence of us in Sein, thus transformed by us. The area of presence (Gebeit) is transformed due to the above to the fact (es gibt) of presence upon thinking, existence in Gegnet.

So, a theorist doctrine is unflinching moving to the truth or for the truth, similar to the said Soviet doctor of science who moved after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. And all other things are not significant, indeed.

## **2. Aestheticism of Theory and Disgust to Reality**

Why does a man choose the path of theory? I think he lacks beauty of reality, he clearly sees dirt, abomination and absurdity of the world around. We are lucky to be short-sighted, we do not notice all of it.

Every theoretical construction, especially modelling, on the one hand is reduction of squalor of this world, and on the other hand it is an attempt to replace all of this dirt with something truly harmonious and beautiful: poetry is born out of humming (Joseph Brodsky). Absurd, uneven, rough gob of inhomogenous dirt called Earth is replaced with a nice terrestrial globe, which is pleasant to hold, turn round and look at without any secret intentions and practical thoughts like “How do I travel around San-Francisco?” Maps with their smooth surface, clear coordinate lines and absence of everything superfluous and unnecessary, which lies about or for now is located in the area, are among other things the aestheticization of reality. Cartoons of B. Rodman may be incomprehensible to the majority of viewers, but they are aesthetically attractive, which is how they convince everyone in their truth and correctness.

Theorist is always a sweet pretender, who is like Charlie Chaplin, at whom we laugh, but who makes us cry. And the beauty of theory is probably the only beacon in work and life of theory creator. By the way, A. Einstein also considered the criterion of beauty to be the only criterion of theory validity, as well as the criterion of theory attractiveness.

Theoretical work, unlike everything else, always looks like an ideal and complete fair copy, even if this theory is faked and disproved. In connection with this, in my opinion, Thomas Kuhn [4] was not entirely correct about paradigm shifts and theories dying in them. Caloric theory lives not due to its truth (that is long disproved), but due to its beauty. And we admire this play of human mind, like we admire fresco paintings of old masters, who knew nothing about aerosol sprayers, nitroenamel, acrylic and polyvinyl acetate paints.

## **3. Theory as a Hermeneutic Mean**

Of all kinds of comprehension theoretical comprehension is the only one that does not vulgarize (vulgarity as leveling-off) the one who comprehends and the one that is comprehended. Cruel “Aha! I

got it”, which means becoming equal to what I tried to comprehend, is impossible with respect to theory, and, thank God, the one who comprehends never loses respect to the theory he/she is trying to comprehend or comprehended, for he/she comprehended only a product which doesn’t explain a theorization process.  $g$  will not appear simply because someone will run to the Tower of Pisa and drop different things from it. In the same way, none, even some worthless 0,33, 0,5 or 0,75 Newton’s law will appear, no matter what Oporto and Antonovka apples drop on heads of those dreaming to scream “Eureka!”.

Studying weapons of different nations and historical periods I noticed that the more advanced the civilization, the more means of defence it has among its weapons, all the way to the most developed ones, that considers all its weapons to be the defence system.

In this respect a theorist is always deprived of armour, shields, helmets and other protective paraphernalia. He, as the one who pushes a civilization towards intellectuality, is defenceless and thus inspiring respect in those who follow and listen to him. Means of defence of a theory emerge later when it is applied in practice, especially when it is holding positions under pressure of new ideas, hypotheses and theories. A theorist reminds of an infant perdu, a lost child (this is how French people call those standing guard or being on patrol) of the front line. They are not yet in the next civilization, but are already not in our civilization: they are in a snowstorm and a blizzard of the unknown and the non-existent, in the wild chaos of a pitch-dark night.

What does theoretical comprehension mean? How is it different from the empirical one, for example?—the answer is indisputability. To disprove someone’s empirical comprehension it is enough to present your own contradicting the first one. As a matter of fact, this is how it often happens, at all levels of household fights, from kitchen to the State Duma.

Theoretical comprehension can be disproved only by creating equally strong but a more credible theory. Sometimes disproof of theoretical comprehension takes hundreds and thousands of years. Disproved scientific comprehension (unlike ephemeral empirical one) does not die and continues to exist, but in other form as a superstitious comprehension, tragic comprehension of a disproved theory: we superstitiously understand that a misfortune awaits us if we meet a black cat, but we have already forgotten a theory of evil spirits possessing animals of black color.

#### **4. Shock and Problematization of Activity and Reality**

Upon its emergence, any theory causes shock and makes us find our place in life and restructure ranks, hierarchies and clans. A new theory quickly gains followers, copyists, antagonists (from opponents to intransigent enemies) and the indifferent ones (usually from among those, who do not understand or are not interested in it). At the same time, like circles on water, any opinion continues to be transmitted from one generation to another: Adam Smith had followers (that included Sombart and Schumpeter) and opponents (Weber brothers, for example) and copyists: Karl Marx and all who followed, including among others a humble honorary academician who failed to complete his studies in a theological

seminary (big deal! Plato failed to even enroll there!), Joseph Stalin. But all of this is sociology of science, which is of no interest here and now. Theory also problematizes the reality, which acts as the object of theory, and activity as a part of which this theory was created.

Theories in geography make us rethink and more importantly problematize such fundamental issues as geographical environment, space, landscape, i.e., reality (part, fragment, layer of reality covered by activity or new pragmatist interpretation of reality), as well as equally fundamental issues such as: what is geography?, what is its structure? (what geography includes apart from science), what is its place among other types of activity?

Theoretical work putting problems forward (that is marking fundamental deficit of means with regard to aims of mastering new reality by activity) is inherent in European thinking. As a result of this, the theoretic work in practice of European thinking is connected with technology and engineering that transform problems into tasks or complexes and sequences of tasks

Oriental thinking rejects theoretical work upon the whole and replaces it with ontological work; at the same time ontology simply eliminates emerging problematic stress and thus spawns not engineering but deepest and sometimes beautiful meditation and enlightenment techniques.

## **5. Strategizing Theory as a Search for Its Application. Marketing and Management of Theoretical Work**

While fulfilling the order of the prince who wished to observe the battle from the thick of things, but at the same time being located at a safe distance, Galilei accidentally invented telescope thus making a revolution in astronomy. A great amount of different rubbish fell from the Tower of Pisa and other places of prominence over the sea level, and it turned out that if all those items were ideal objects, they all would have fallen with equal acceleration of 9.8 m/s per second.

Galilei is a rarely successful example of a path of theoretical knowledge ad hoc (on the occasion), in terms of technical necessity. Making a rule out of this case by Paul Feyerabend is a sweet illusion and nothing else. Needless to hope that Einstein will be given an engineering task: they'd rather give him ideas for engineering development. Einstein's participation in the nuclear project does not disprove the opinion of the scientist himself that a nuclear bomb cannot exist.

Here comes one of the most important issues of socialization of science. Town contra gown wars continue. Science, with varying degrees of sincerity and frankness, does not care about the needs of practice and the society, it is much more interested in its own intimate affairs and secrets. And when a gardener brings to Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, arguing whether a principal mole has a principle vision, a real mole on a shovel, the host, Aquinas, says despidingly: take away this carrion immediately, we are arguing whether a principal mole has a principle vision, not your lump of stink. The society is patiently bringing on its shovel to the science orders for scientific research and development, and financing for these orders (by a small jet) in a humble and hopeless expectation of results, and scientists shamelessly indulge their inordinate curiosity with these crumbs.

And this story, due to its dejection, would have dried out and stopped long ago if no strategic research of applicability of theoretical knowledge have been formed.

The art (and problem) of strategizing consists in the fact that if the figure or the position of a theorist is sufficiently personified, it is quite difficult and problematic to find at least remotely comparable customer who would not only understand the meaning of the theory, but also pay for it, or not only pay, but also understand it.

In the theory market, like in any other market, the most important thing is to form demand, and the supply is already formed or will form itself.

What is the demand for theory and who is the consumer of theoretical goods?

When it comes to theoretical geography, the demand in this market, even effectual demand, is quite diverse. First of all, we are talking about politicians and PR behind them (in front of them, above them, below them—this is insignificant) The main and most scarce resource of Soviet democracy were people, of the post-Soviet one—ideas. There were always enough money for democracy and Soviet democracy. And since no one observes the scale, including the scale of ideas, practically the same money is paid for the ideas by a mayoral candidate of a shabby city and by an equally shabby presidential candidate.

The authorities (not to be confused with politicians, Russia is not Europe) are basically also consumers, but with three significant differences from PR and politicians:

space and time scale is strictly observed here

demand is more scrupulous and meticulous here

there is much less money here, than we would prefer.

Business and business consulting are badly in need of new theoretical developments, but this sphere is and for a long time will be a risky, venture demand segment. At the same time no one and nowhere can create a more amazing and peculiar principal task like domestic entrepreneurs, these headless horsemen of the new economy without fear and reproach.

Education as a sphere of consumption of theoretical work is largely under self-sustainment, nevertheless, there are opportunities here as well. An innovative society, which may become an alternative or a formation following the communicative society, will transform the educational system into the main consumer of theoretical developments, but this is a topic for a separate study.

Finally, science itself, through the formed system of grants and foundations, is gradually becoming able to provide effective demand for elite developments within itself. Sociology of science, history of science, methodology and science studies are becoming more and more necessary accompaniment, escort, tail of science.

It should be noted that the strategic support of theoretical works is always a bit of deception: a simple Mona Lisa is offered to the buyer, though the seller knows for sure that he is selling the immortal La Gioconda.

Thematically, demand in a draft design can be distributed as follows:

business location theory (works of A. Weber, A. Lösch, N. Kolosovsky were related to production, not business, business is synonymous to the economy only to a small extent, therefore regional economy theories do not include business issues)

infrastructure location theory (we do not even know the principles of this location)

networks location theory (perhaps this is a specific instance of the infrastructure location theory)

information placement/internet posting theory (here we are constantly coming across paradoxes and eccentricities)

the theory of instructors, constructors and configurators of geographical thinking (the idea of geographical thinking itself is far from perfect, here we are speaking about the formation of a new geographical education, not only professional but mainly common, public).

## 6. Theorization Theory

So, finally, we got through the labyrinth of these thoughts to the coveted door with the inscription START.

Many theories represent total generalizations like all men are bastards, all women are bitches. Such theories are clustered in dull sweaty feminist clubs in Berkeley and other universities of California and the rest of America. Usually such theories are universal and apply to all situations except each specific one, therefore they may be considered panacea.

Analog theories are another type of theories (not to be confused with analog models!) transferred from one reality and activity to another. This is Social Darwinism, for example. Many management theories are mechanically transferred from the theory and practice of machines and mechanisms management (for example, computers) to social management and business management. Endless crowds of these theorists stand in queue for bankruptcy. These theories may be called metaphorical with good reason. And panacea and metaphor theories, despite their abundance (and, more likely, thanks to it), are of no interest within the framework of this work, since they are somewhat superstructural, superficial.

In our opinion, theoretical work itself is deeply reflective and is aimed at the search of the essence of the theorization object. Reflection is, in principle, not superstructural: it is inside, it is designed to get into the essence and into the depth of the studied, investigated phenomenon or process, it is, in the strict sense of the word, insightful. Theoretical reflection, as mentioned above, has a quaternary level:

practice activities reflection

practice management reflection

reflection of scientific support and management support

theoretical reflection within the framework of scientific support.

And these are multidirectional reflections, a reflective labyrinth, a reflective puzzle, causing to keep all the levels parallel, not successive.

At the same time, theoretical penetration may be considered as a process, so that we deal with a methodological theory represented by logics and a chain of evidences.



Such penetration resembles movement to a source of light through windfall or storm.

Theoretical penetration may be considered also as a result, as approaching the shore, exit, housing or fire in a forest. It is always a joyful and a bit marvelous penetration into the illuminated circle of doubtless truth. Such are metaphysical theories, in which ontology revealed in intuition, insight, after long wandering in the dark and without any reference points, appears and proves its truth with its obviousness: actually, it is.

Finally, it is possible to imagine penetration both as a process and as a result: if so, it will be like this; hence ..., etc. Such complete or new theories may include, for example, the theory of relativity, both explicating the mathematical line of argument and presenting a world view with the consequences and continuations arising out of this view.

Iconically and dogmatically presented and drafted full theories become the basis for training courses and are a material for sociocultural reproduction.

September 2001, Marina, California

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