Object-Oriented Activity--Whose?

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1. On method

If I were asked to define the place in psychology of the so-called activity approach relative to the other schools and tendencies of this science and assess its role in the development of our concept of man’s psyche, then first of all I would run up against the difficult problem of a necessary and sufficient criterion for determining its sources and the extent of its influence on other approaches by psychologists to its object.

Customarily it is considered that variants of such a criterion are given by the two different methodologies of scientific exploration: empirical methodology and substantive-genetic methodology, which promises to reach the sought-after result by investigating the historical and sociocultural genesis of the contemporary realities that form the field of the science’s subject matter at a given time. I would reject the empirical method from the outset, having learned well in my time (together, moreover, with the psychologist V.V. Davydov) that empirical generalization is productive only when we are dealing with the general properties of the phenomena of immediately present existence, but is powerless to determine their universal species essence. But nor would I embark upon substantive-genetic analysis right away and without reservation. Here too there is something that requires close
attention: The problem is that at least three different modes of theoretical investigation have found a home under its “roof” without getting in one another’s way. To make *my own* (not the reader’s) task easier, I shall name the second and third of these modes *in my own way*. Thus, I must now describe extremely briefly the following logical methods for the reconstruction of wholeness: the comparative historical method,¹ the comparative categorial method, and the conceptual-genetic method. The first of these is the *comparative historical* method.

This is a well-known method of defining the realities of mankind’s spiritual culture that are under study. But it has already managed to discredit itself pretty badly (for example, in philology). Now we all understand why: although it gave quite encouraging *descriptive* results in any special field of knowledge, it left hidden not only the historical-logical foundation of the changes recorded but also their most proximate causes, which could therefore be interpreted in different ways. To be precise, they could be interpreted in any way that might be found convenient by one or another investigator, carried away by *his own* general conception that differed from the conceptions of other investigators. For psychology this would be all the more dangerous in view of the fact that even without this additional complication its subject matter has been and still is understood in extraordinarily diverse ways, with some definitions of the science standing in direct opposition to others.

The second approach to the problem is the comparative categorial method, which is just as promising for descriptive purposes but also just as unreliable in its results. It is the analysis of contradictions revealed in the content of the various conceptions (of man’s psyche in particular) that have been dominant at one or another period. It is especially effective in examining the meanings of their mutual refutations. But it, too, requires us to go beyond the limits of the period under study, because the roots of every conception lie in the distant past. In a certain respect, therefore, the techniques of the comparative historical method supplement the comparative categorial method, with the sole difference that the genesis of the conflicting conceptions is reestablished in an arbitrary fashion in the interest of the particular conception that the investigator favors. It is precisely this method of determining the place and role of a scientific school in the development of a scientific discipline that is most widespread in our studies of psychology.
Thus, in the second method too there lies in wait for us . . . no, not even the danger, but the predetermined fate of subjectivistic interpretations (not to be confused with the productive subjectivity that is inevitable in any science) of the very foundation of the process under study—in our case, of the process of the formation, establishment, and development of man’s psyche. So here, too, just as in the preceding variant of the search for the key to defining the place and role in psychology of the activity approach, we see the validity of Marx’s criticism of those theorists who in order to substantiate their own conceptions of the essence of the phenomena of immediate reality invent or use a suitable, as it seems to them, category and then search for it in history.2 In so doing, they fail to understand that no category is a sole and all-explanatory means of forming the field of their theories’ subject matter; it is only one of the universal meaning-shaping forms of the content of an idea, which only in organic unity with other forms provides its entire affective-semantic, intersubjective space with possible paths of development into a concept. These paths are found and completed, each in its own way, by means of the intrasubjective efforts of creative individuality. Here I have in mind, naturally, the content of theoretical thinking.3

Marx’s criticism is also directly pertinent to the methods by which a number of enthusiasts of “the activity approach” demonstrate its advantages. There are plenty of articles and books in which with the very best of intentions, purposefully and stubbornly, the category of activity is sought out in the texts of prominent figures from the history of philosophy and psychology, starting with Plato and Aristotle—not to mention Fichte, Hegel, Marx, and Vygotsky. The violence done thereby to the foundations of the latter’s own constructions arouses the just ire of the supporters of other psychological conceptions, who propose other categories for defining the sources of the psychic. This gives rise to impassioned disputes, the value of which, frankly speaking, is not great—or to be more precise, simply negligible.

And, finally, the third method: the conceptual-genetic method. I have named it thus in order to distinguish it externally from the “substantive-genetic method”—the recognized and customary name, but a confusing one. I indicated the reason for the change of name above: it is because the roof of the substantive-genetic method shelters both the methods previously discussed; although disguised under that roof, in
their logical essence they are empirical methods. Genesis, after all, is not a category but a conception—it refers first of all to the genesis of epoch-making sociocultural realities. For it is precisely in the common living field of their intersubjective affective meanings that theoretical thinking defines its object and the logical modes of its cogitation. It defines its object totally, in all its substantive modifications. Fortunately, the Russian school of the historical genesis of cultures already has many achievements to its credit: let us recall the fundamental works of A.F. Losev, M.M. Bakhtin, D.S. Likhachev, S.A. Averintsev, Iu.M. Lotman, and A.Ia. Gurevich. Let us also recall the works of L.M. Batkin, M.K. Petrov, E.Iu. Solov’ev, M.B. Turovskii, and others. Their creative experience should suffice to convince anyone that reconstruction of sociocultural genesis requires going beyond the boundaries of any special (and self-isolating) professional discipline. Psychologists, as a rule, have neither the time nor the strength nor the logical means for this, being too engrossed in their internecine squabbles.

No, not the interested observer’s superficial acquaintance with the disputes of professional psychologists but my own theoretical position—the position of a direct participant in those disputes for at least the past twenty-five years—allows me to declare that the truth in such disputes still looms in the distance. This is no coincidence where the comparative categorial method is concerned: in these disputes, each conception of man’s psyche and its emergence and development lays claim to the truth of its foundation, which as a special category draws into itself all the manifestations of the psychic life of Homo sapiens. It is precisely as such that the categories of object-oriented activity, communication, reflexion, and so on make themselves known. In other, no less renowned conceptions of the psyche, such categories as the gestalt, stimulus-reaction, the reality principle and the pleasure principle, repression, the unconscious, conditional and unconditional reflexes, dominant, and orientation have served their creators in the same role. Such disputes of Slavs among themselves are disputes over the right of each category to be the main, if not the sole, explanatory principle of the totality of psychic phenomena of human existence.

In other words, each of the preferred categories lays claim to the status of the finally discovered initial postulate of fundamental psychology, which predetermines the substantive basis of all its possible specializations. But the most interesting thing here is that it is precisely...
the *key* category, by *drawing* into itself the whole semantic field of psychology (at each stage of its development) that made it possible to see in the interpreted phenomena of man’s psychic life something really important for this science that had remained unexplained from other *points of view*—that is, during the temporary triumph of the claims to primacy of other categories. Thus for a deepened understanding both of the phenomena themselves and of their foundation, each of the conceptions is of value and in this sense of equal value. And the hierarchy of their meanings creates a weighty and visible trace of the process that in dialectics is called *truth*. But it is precisely truth that grows pale and turns into metaphor when a single working category proclaims itself as its advent.

By the way, concerning dialectics: It is interesting that in twentieth-century postclassical philosophy the idea of the self-sufficiency and equality of each of the past and contemporary schools of philosophy became in essence quite trivial. A simple example: is Berkeley’s *esse est percipi* [to be is to perceive—Trans.] really not truth, even in the full context of the author’s proofs of this famous thesis? After all, even Diderot remarked that mankind has no logical means of refuting it. Yet today any philosopher (if he is a philosopher) will agree that *perceptibility* is a Cartesian and a Lockean and a Spinozan and a Kantian (including neo-Kantian) and a Hegelian and a Marxian and a Husserlian and an existentialist *attribute* of Being. These philosophies speak in different ways, though always of one and the same thing, for they grasp the very essence of the matter, which manifests itself from objectively different but vitally important sides. This is so because the very definition of the real is possible only within the limits of its relation to the subject, to oneself, as something *real to the perceiver*.

Berkeley’s position is, therefore, a truly philosophical position, distinct from other truly philosophical positions only in the nuances of its empiricism. Without it, moreover, contemporary philosophical discourse is unthinkable, as is the common object-substantive field of theoretical thought in general in its historical emergence and self-definition. It does not enter the head of any *philosopher* to declare “Bishop Berkeley” a heretic relative to some absolutely true religion of philosophy and throw him onto the trash heap of history. The same thing goes for Hegel and Marx and Husserl and Wittgenstein—in short, for any philosopher. If in Russian psychological schools and tendencies there...
reigns to this day a different mode of self-definition, then that is more their misfortune than their fault. Apparently, they are still affected by “party” intolerance, nurtured by the ideology of the class approach.

It is no coincidence that voices ring out: “the activity approach” has not justified itself, it has fizzled out. And there follows quite an amusing explanation: “It has fizzled out because its supporters were orthodox Marxists; Marxism has discredited itself completely and S.L. Rubinshtein was never a Marxist.”8 I recall even more scathing arguments exchanged not so very long ago by the supporters and opponents of various psychological schools in their “battles” for their own school’s right to existence—and to supremacy. And so I find it hard to believe that this is a problem of bygone days, although I would very much like to believe it and, even more, help to bring it about. With this I pass on to the main part of the article.

2. On the principles and foundations of psychology

From everything said above, there arises the question: In which universal sociocultural forms has the permanent foundation of the concept of man’s psyche become established and rooted itself? But first concerning this permanent foundation of psychology itself.

Naturally, it cannot be defined by the meaning of one or another individual category taken from the arsenal of psychology. Nor can it be taken from the arsenal of categories of one or another school of philosophy. And, in general, it cannot be expressed by means of a category by virtue of the very definition of category (see above). Moreover, we must bear in mind that we live in our own time, in the intersubjective field of our own special culture, of the Euro-American (U.S.) civilization that took shape by the middle of the twentieth century and is now becoming globalized—and not in the Middle Ages or even at the beginning of the twentieth century, which slides away from us forever with each signal of exact time. Consequently, the definition of the foundations of psychology as a science of which we shall find ourselves suddenly capable is not an absolute definition, valid once and for all. And nonetheless it must be a definition precisely of its foundation—a definition developed into a concept by a judgment concerning the ability of the real to reproduce itself and our physical existence itself through mnemosis (Plato), the form of all forms (Aristotle),
thinking as an attribute of the real (Spinoza), perceptibility (Berkeley), one or another rung of development of Reason (Hegel), sensuality (Feuerbach and Marx), and then through the will, representation, Leden- und Organslust, phenomenality, and so on, and so forth—in short, through subjectivity as the moving force of human existence.

For our purpose, however, we cannot use a single term from this list that lays claim to generalization of its meaning, nor any of its possible résumés. We cannot use them not only on account of their multiplicity of meaning outside the semantic context of each of the philosophical conceptions mentioned, but also simply because they are all none other than categories.

It is already, I hope, clear to us: any productively subjective definition that we may formulate of the foundation of psychology as a science that is capable of acquiring equal value at least with the definition of the postulates of contemporary mathematics or physics requires going beyond the limits of psychology and philosophy proper. Here, by way of analogy, I again cite words of Marx, uttered by him in connection with political economy: it does not begin in that place where it is discussed as such. An appeal to the subjective-intimate psychic motivation of man’s behavior—the motivation of all life-affirming acts of his physical life itself—can be nothing other than an appeal to the forces that “pulled” our animal forebear out of the realm of involuntary living. To this very day, each of us draws upon these forces to become a human being or at least something resembling a human being.

Can we identify these forces with labor as the first and basic form of object-oriented activity? Or with articulate speech, and together with it all the realities of semiotic-symbolic mediation? Or with communication? Or, to turn directly to psychological neologisms, with a new orientation, with the notorious pleasure principle in its fight with the reality principle, or with the gestalt? As report givers say, the list can be extended.

And why not? I answer the question with a question. Each variant contains its own partial or relative truth [pravda]. But complete truth [istina] lies only in the historical-logical reconstruction of the process of the rise and historical realization of the culture of Homo sapiens, in which each partial truth, occupying the more modest place of a valid but one-sided version of this process, can be defined only as an abstraction that is useful in a number of applications. For all its validity
as one of the sides of the process being interpreted, it is abstracted not only from other equally abstract definitions, engaging willy-nilly in "principled" dispute with them, but also—for this very reason—from the concept of the foundation of the process as such, the foundation that determines it in its entirety, in all its manifestations and "mechanisms." Due to the brevity of the genre (an article is not a book!), I shall not consider communication, semiotic-symbolic mediators, the gestalt, stimulus-reaction, or any other abstract basic principles. The theme of the article confines me to labor and man's object-oriented activity as a whole.

In a number of other works, I have already had occasion to discuss the inescapable inner contradiction of the hypothesis that is summarized in the short, almost slogan-like, formula: labor created man. Labor and articulate speech. . . . Labor and all other forms of object-oriented activity. . . . Labor and constantly recreated intersubjective spiritual-practical culture. . . . Neither I nor indeed, it seems, anyone else any longer objects to the idea in itself—that is, in its abstraction (for an exception, see the preceding reference). But—excuse the repetition—I can say the same about communication and its social forms, and about orientation, the dominant, the gestalt, and so on.

Nonetheless, in each case, even reducing the fundamental problem of the foundation to that mental space where causes and their actions reign, we are forced to ask one another: if labor is goal-conforming and voluntary activity, then is it not truer to say that it was precisely the ability of our animal forebears to set goals that gave birth to human labor? In other words, if each act of object-oriented activity is subjectively motivated by the affective-semantic dominant of the image of the goal (or, if you like, by orientation), then we have to answer the question of the possibility of the prehistorical appearance in the life-activity of our animal forebears of voluntary goal-setting, and, consequently, of the very image of the goal in all its affective-semantic reality—that is, precisely as a new psychic formation. And we have to presuppose these and defer precisely as external determinants (i.e., ones that do not determine the sought-after essence) all the hypothetical natural conditions that forced our animal forebears to take hold of sticks, stones, and other such natural objects and use them as prototypical instruments of labor, processed in a way calculated to adapt them for future application. For the whole essence of the matter is just
this calculation, because it is a *mental action or thought-action*, as the unforgettable G.P. Shchedrovitskii loved to say and write.

At the same time, I take into account the possibility of using the empirical method to predetermine in quantitative terms the emergence of a new quality that would justify the given “slogan.” The empirical method is used too frequently in the anthropological and philosophical literature for us to be able to pass it by in silence. This mode of proof, if one may so call it, is simpler than Occam’s razor: the seed of the new, supposedly, always grows inside and emerges from the old; the quantitative growth of the new leads to a point at which it begins to dominate and all the old is relegated to the periphery.

Everything, it would seem, becomes clear: our animal forebears, like primates today, were capable of thinking, albeit in a situational and exclusively object-oriented manner. They must have been able to solve successfully the tasks posed by critical situations, just as our primate contemporaries solve them today—namely, with the use of auxiliary natural means such as sticks and stones. But unlike the forebears of all our animal contemporaries, our conjectured forebears had to solve them more and more frequently (more frequently, more, faster—a purely quantitative measure!), as a result of which they (at last!) *chanced upon* the idea of improving sticks and stones. This was the beginning of the labor that humanized them.

Simple indeed. In my view, however, this is just the simplicity that is worse than theft, because the “seed of the new,” if it does contain something really *new*, imperiously demands an answer to the question: how did this seed become possible, what kind of force generated it?

If we presuppose that situational intelligence and its affective component (and they are no novelty to contemporary animals either) have always borne (and still bear?) within themselves the embryo of independence from the criticality of a situation, and if this “embryo of the human psyche” has always existed as the ability, which has not especially manifested itself so far, to form as a motive of conduct the image of a distant goal (exactly the ability that makes behavior voluntary), then only in this case can purely quantitative changes (something like intensities of reaction in solving increasingly complex situational tasks) lead—no, not to a new quality, but only to a new *quantitative* measure of the old quality, to a more active creativity in the same psychic processes in man as were present in animals. For even “concealed for the time being,” creativity could not but manifest its energy, making possible,
for example, such psychic phenomena in the higher apes as Köhler’s insides and similar manifestations of animal wit.

But, it would seem, it is considered proved that in Köhler’s experiments his chimpanzees possessed a different ability—the ability instantly to transfer complex skills, developed through past experience in the manipulation of objects, to an experimental situation that by means of objects visually sets a goal thought up by man. But the essence of the matter for us now does not lie in an experiment, which always proves what the experimenter wanted it to prove. From a purely logical point of view, it is necessary to derive the new not as something that had already existed inside the old, but as something that negates this old. Otherwise, we put ourselves in the same boat as the late T.D. Lysenko, for whom the “dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality” explained the emergence of the carrot’s ability to discharge its seeds onto the vegetable patches for the good of the population.

For, however you may train the affectiveness of situational intelligence, however frequently an animal may have to apply it to solve situational tasks, by itself it will not turn into a productive act of goal-setting—into the thinking of a human being. Moreover, the improvement of the object of situational manipulation that turns it into an instrument of labor is possible only outside the critical situation with its tasks, which demand instinctual, involuntary solution. He who is capable of such voluntary efforts is already a thinking animal. In other words, he is an animal capable of transforming in his imagination the sensual objects of existence, creating the images that he needs before they suddenly “break through” by themselves in the “material.” But such an animal is already a human being. And absolutely everything that he then, throughout his long history, mentally transforms and accomplishes in reality is no longer a matter of any new principle but, as they say, a matter of technique. This will be none other than the realization of a truly new quality of the psyche of living beings on the planet Earth.

3. On the beginning of human existence

So, did labor give birth to man, or did a thinking subject capable of goal-setting (man) find for himself an adequate form of object-action existence in the objective world?

I say right out: while this is none other than a problem of the chicken
and the egg, it needs a serious solution, but not a formal one and not a logical-mathematical one, even be it one so cogently rigorous as the solutions of similar logical paradoxes that B. Russell and A. Whitehead set out in their three-volume work *Principia Mathematica*. We can reach an assessment of the real possibility of a common foundation for our “chickens and eggs”—that is, the possibility of a foundation for object-substantive thinking, a foundation for all possible thought-actions, including a foundation for the form of them that we call labor or object-oriented activity in general—only by means of a logical reconstruction of the process. That is, we can do so only by relying on the highest forms of reflexive self-consciousness that most fully represent its essence, and by positing precisely that essence as the force that transformed the type of life-activity of that population (or those populations) of animals to which we owe our existence on the planet. That is, however strange this may appear after all that has been said above, we can find the possibility of the emergence of a force bearing within itself the ability for voluntary and goal-conforming behavior only in the world of involuntary life-actions.

Our attempt here to find in involuntary life-activity the embryo or elements of voluntary behavior differs from other attempts that erased the boundary between the world of man and the animal world in that it must be built on a different logic—the logic of the search for *causa sui* that was founded by Plato, Aristotle, the neo-Platonists, and Spinoza, developed by classical German philosophy, and is spontaneously reproduced, unexpectedly for itself, by any theory built on a priori postulates. In the twentieth century, such were the fundamental theories of logic, mathematics, and theoretical physics and genetics.

According to the logic of *causa sui*, motivation of man’s goal-conforming and voluntary behavior is possible when and to the extent that it has no other foundation than itself. Here, naturally, we can abstract neither from the processes of biological species formation, including the genetic submolecular “mechanisms” of inheritance, nor from the species-specific inherited subjective motivation of so-called situational behavior. But at the same time, we are compelled to acknowledge that no adaptations or “improvements,” no more, faster, more intensive, and other such quantitative spells are capable of making inherited species-specific traits of involuntary behavior voluntary, if only because the motivation of voluntary behavior wholly excludes the possibility of its inheritance.13
The mode by which acts of motivation of involuntary actions are accomplished and inherited is directly opposed to the mode by which the subjective motives of goal-conforming and voluntary actions are inherited and realized. The behavior of an animal is involuntary because it is predetermined by the situational reality and by the modes of survival in that reality inherited from its forebears. And only on their basis, without changing that reality, does the animal acquire the skills of the variable application of those modes of survival in ontogenesis. But in man, in any situation, the intimate-subjective process of goal formation that forms the motive of voluntary action is triggered and conditioned by the necessity of affective-semantic transformation of the means of dealing with others and with himself; and this necessity is prompted neither by the situation as such nor by a mode inherited from his forebears. On the contrary, with these purely biological pre-requisites man would have neither the ability to set goals nor voluntary actions, for the latter by themselves and in themselves wholly exclude the dictates of the given, subordinating themselves to the dictates of affective-semantic givenness. Although this givenness also contains givens, they are its own—the givens of the canons and forms of conscious existence.

In other words, both the situation objectively given as a task by people’s common goal-conforming and voluntary actions and the forms, means, and modes of carrying on the life-activity of the organism inherited by them from without appear to man only as universal (and common to all) affective meaning, which depends neither on the vital schemas of voluntary reactions nor on the vital-organic significance of the perceived objective world. For this reason, our Homo sapiens is first of all a subject who puzzles out the riddles posed by his own voluntary thinking.

If the question of the object nature of the human psyche is posed thus, the possibility is ruled out of returning to the Cartesian opposition between soul and body. But it is precisely this opposition that constantly pokes out, like an awl from a bag, in the majority of the psychological conceptions that are in dispute with the so-called activity approach in psychology, and, indeed, in that approach itself.

But even in order to understand the causes of the contemporary and specifically psychological version of Cartesian dualism, we have to look for it in a place where the historical preconditions for the rise and constant reproduction of human subjectivity as such are preserved forever.
and where the psyche is merely a modus of the generative force that to this day continuously humanizes man in each of us from the start of our existence.

This problem is beyond the reach of psychology as its scope has been defined, albeit not very clearly, in the twentieth century. Awareness of its own preconditions is, therefore, also beyond its reach. What is more, the longer it searches for them the further away it gets from them, for it searches not where it lost them but where it is brighter. That is, it searches where there shines to this day the natural light of Reason of the empiricists and rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who to substantiate the whole of their own metaphysics discovered the logic of the discourse of positive knowledge as the only possible logic of subjective transformation in man's consciousness of so-called objective reality.

So it is by no means a coincidence that the classics of psychology saw and see no other way to explain the miracle of man's deeply personal, subjective affective-semantic motivation in his every voluntary and goal-conforming action than by transferring the entire responsibility for it—no, not, as a rule, so much to physiology or to culture external to it as precisely to a mediator that is akin in some respect both to the objective existence of human behavior and to its initially subjective motivation—even if this mediator is none other than the externalization of the motivation itself. And precisely here is the crux of the matter—that is, the theoretical position that, together with its logic, gave rise in their time to psychic-physical parallelism.

4. On the generative and regenerative relation

We all recall that the supporters of “the activity approach” name Vygotsky as its founding father. And I cannot but admit that they are right to trace the theme of the primacy of the cultural-historical over the biological determinant back precisely to the texts and ideas of our common teacher.

I speak about this in greater detail in my article “The Psychologist’s Own Alien” [Svoe chuzhoe u psikhologa]. There I show how in the course of defending psychology, in particular from Krechmer’s simplistic use of the idea of the unity of nature and culture, Vygotsky strove to affirm a different principle of their merger—the principle of unity with difference, unity but unity of opposites! The whole issue
here is how to understand the nature of the opposite. The big error of
those who see in man’s life-activity a unity of the cultural and the
biological and insist on this unity lies not in this, but first of all in the
fact that for them different foundations have come together in this
“unity” while preserving themselves. For them, the mere fact of the
unity of nature and culture in the human type of life is sufficient em-
pirical proof of the presence in this type of life of two quite different
foundations. This leads to something in direct opposition to Vygotsky,
for whom the fact of different manifestations, natural and cultural, of
the process of emergence of man’s psyche is the realization of a single
foundation—namely, man’s own foundation, which remains to be speci-

ified. This is much closer to Spinoza than to Descartes. In Spinoza, as
we recall, a single substance—self-creating Nature—was the single
foundation of the existence of all its endless attributes and modi. Among
its attributes we find thinking and corporeality—opposite to one an-
other and mutually exclusive in the Descartian sense. But his single
substance does not bear them passively within itself, as natura naturata
(created Nature) would bear them, but generates itself as natura
naturans (creating Nature); for him, therefore, it is God.

The mode of presentation of the subject matter of psychology that
merely records the facts of the interaction of realities with different
foundations is subordinated to the logic of cause-conformity, entail-
ing at the same time recognition of the dual determination of man’s
nature as an obvious truth. For the goals that Vygotsky set himself,
such a logic is absolutely unreal and therefore ineffective. In order to
demonstrate that it is essentially necessary for the development of each
child of Homo sapiens that he possess his own creative force—a force
of the formation of each stage of the psyche’s age-related develop-
ment as a dynamic unity of opposites—he needed a quite different
logic—a logic of entelechial goal-conformity.

Hence Vygotsky’s noncoincidental appeal to Spinoza. For Vygotsky,
the transformation of the natural preconditions of man’s existence occurs
“in its own way” at each age-related stage of the psyche’s formation—
that is, in a different way than at other age-related stages. This is ac-
complished by none other than the initial (for man) unity of culture
and nature—that is, their merger into one, into something new, the merger
that once led to the human mode of life on Earth. Not to see this is an
unforgivable error for a psychologist. In essence, Vygotsky (just like
Rubinshtein, another remarkable psychologist and philosopher—first
of all in his book Man and the World (Chelovek i mir) posed anew a problem common to Descartes and Spinoza—the problem of the generative relation.

I recapitulate in my own words what is known to all: in his quest for a foundation for definitions of the existence of nature and man, Descartes arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The foundation of all manifestations of natural existence is the relation of the extension and duration (space and time) of each of them to the extension and duration (space and time) of all the others that constitute the universe.

2. As the subjective (soulful) motivation of all manifestations of man’s existence is in no way determined by this relation, it unavoidably follows that the life of the soul is a manifestation of a different—namely, a spiritual—substance.

Let us not worry at the moment about the logical-methodological consequences that in the empiricist type of thinking flow from this axiom of Descartes—namely, dualism or, which is the same thing, psychic-physical parallelism. Its value lies in something else—in its precise demonstration of the fundamental impossibility of defining the psyche through its spatial-temporal relation to corporeal substance. This relation, in any of its modifications, cannot be generative of man’s psyche! For this reason alone, the true value of the axiom lies in the way that it demonstrates precisely how limited and fruitless from the start any attempts are to reduce the psyche and all its phenomena to the interaction of the soul with corporeal processes either outside or inside the corporeality of the organism. But no less important for us at the moment is another consequence: the foundation of the psychic must be sought not in those relations by which the corporeality of existence is determined, but in something else—namely, in the relation that generates the psyche. It was this idea that Spinoza developed in his Ethics, although he did not accept the conclusion of Descartes concerning the two substances.

Spinoza defined the relation that generates the life of the soul in general and that of man’s soul in particular in the logic of causa sui—namely, as the relation, originally inherent in nature, of the corporeally defined modus to any of its modi that by its own movement transforms its own form for the former modus. And he gave this relation a precise name: thinking—an attribute of the single substance, an
attribute of Nature, which is therefore God. Plato would say—finding within itself (recalling within itself) its idea, its eidos, while Rikkert called the same relation transforming understanding. I shall prove textually that during the time that separates Plato from Rikkert (that is more than two thousand years) it is precisely philosophy that has affirmed the idea of the causa sui of the psychic, which needs for its justification neither God nor any other purely spiritual substance. 16

I am convinced that we must also use the logic of self-generation to understand the place and role of the object-activity approach in psychology, which has come closest to this idea (although, in my view, by no means extremely close). In our case, we must use the logic of the search for the beginning of thinking as man’s original relation to himself and to the world, a relation that unavoidably generates his psyche and constantly regenerates it in each of us. Thereby it generates and regenerates the type and all modes of specifically human life-activity. That is why I have attached such importance to Descartes’s definition of the generative relation, and, for the purposes of this article, to his definition of the special relation of man’s forebear to the world that transformed him and marked him out as a special “population” and that constantly regenerates this population, in the process reproducing only itself in all the endlessly diverse forms of the life-activity of each of us, including its supposedly mutually opposed corporeal and spiritual forms.

As I have already said, the search for the relation that generates and reproduces man has only one direction, one path—the logical-historical analysis of the modes of reproduction of people’s culture that are accomplished by history. For all the sometimes radical differences between the cultures of different epochs and the modes by which they take root and are reproduced and preserved, what defines the culture of people as such—in other words, exactly what makes people into people, subjects of their own goal-conforming and voluntary behavior—must be reproduced in each of them. This explains the attraction of the abstractions that work productively in psychology and were mentioned at the beginning of the article: labor, object-oriented activity, communication and its social forms, consciousness, thinking, soul, and so on. But to each of them may be applied Kant’s question (in principle, a philosophical question): how is this possible? Might, for example, labor at some time have become possible for the reproduction of the life
of man’s forebear and yet still remain essentially necessary for us all? The same question can be raised—and, alas, with the same doubtful success—in respect of all other real manifestations of the essential peculiarity of people’s existence. The reader himself can carry out the thought experiment of trying to answer the question how is this possible? in respect of any of the aforementioned abstractions. He will end up with a new helping of abstract “definitions,” each of which will again require an answer to the same sacramental question.

The result of attempts precisely thus to satisfy our (let us say) curiosity, which inevitably leads us into a vicious circle of reciprocally defined abstractions, is well known: in the final reckoning, the category will be chosen that best ensures the substantive coherence of the favorite hypothesis. And what of it if the supporters of other hypotheses, or at least the supporters of continuous biological evolution, prove that labor, for instance, is found in beavers and many other species, while even in insects the social community is no worse, if not better, organized than ours? There can be no argument about thinking: it is no great matter that Engels himself, the author of a booklet about how it was precisely labor, speech, and therefore the social community that turned ape into man, thought that animals possess reason, citing as evidence the mind of his dog, but even a professional, a solid researcher and naturalist, writes in a fundamental work on animal behavior of various forms of culture, social communities, their thinking and labor.\textsuperscript{17} Hegel was right: he who thinks in abstractions does not think at all, for he does not judge the real creatively and productively.\textsuperscript{18}

This remark returns me to the beginning of the article, to the explanation of its main problem: the place and role of the activity approach in psychology relative to other psychological approaches to man’s psyche. The problem can now be formulated more concretely: does the category “object-oriented activity” really live up to its claim to the key role relative to all other psychological categories? I hope that after all that has been said above no one will find the courage to reply in the affirmative to such a directly posed question. And all the same . . .

5. The objective nature of all that is perceived, experienced, and given meaning

And all the same, I know of no other psychological school or conception that by the very logic of its presentation of psychology’s subject
matter comes so close to, almost to the brink of, the logic of *causa sui* as the conception of man’s object-oriented activity. True, this becomes clear only when you picture to yourself the whole of its hidden history—a history of the long search of philosophically inclined psychologists for a mode of presentation of their subject adequate to man’s own affectively thinking psyche, a history with all the paradoxes of the development in it and by it of the purely philosophical idea of the productive identity of the foundations of the concepts *subjective* and *objective*. The majority of other histories, as Vygotsky demonstrated in his time, retain the Cartesian opposition between soul and body, overcome in imaginary fashion by metaphysical deliberations about neutral or ill-defined mediators between them.

But mediators either trigger affective-semantic reactions to the objective corporeality of “irritants” or are incorporated, through the meanings established for them in culture, into the mode of solving practical and theoretical tasks that has been inherited from parents. Indeed, this very mode is usually treated as one prudently prepared by animals, by their biological evolution of variants adapted to natural reality. For some psychologists, this idea reflects an ineradicable but, if I may be permitted to put it this way, an inner, not always clearly proclaimed, behaviorism. One cannot but notice such behaviorism even, for example, in the general schema of object-oriented activity—for instance, in A.N. Leontiev’s analysis of people’s capacity for object-oriented activity that is presented in a schema known to all psychologists. It is also visible in my beloved P.Ia. Galperin’s description of procedures of internalization. In both cases, the Cartesian reactivity of the psyche gives the psyche an almost passive character that is aroused to object-oriented activity by an external cause, including the quite “natural” laws of orientation, search, and memory, the ability to master the schema of external action, and so on. For other psychologists, the same idea is expressed in a belletristic pathos of affirmation of the fateful role of innate, and therefore primordial, psychodramas in the emergence of man’s soul—for example, in psychoanalytical (in essence—naturalistic) theories from S. Freud to E. Fromm.

Thereby we come to the problem of the *subject-matter field* of psychology as a separate science, the problem of its specific object, and at the same time to the primordial problem of the *subject-object* relation. The essence of the matter lies in the very *mode of presentation* of this problem.
Each epoch and each change of general cultural paradigms in making sense of the place and role of man himself in his relation to the objective world of Being, while preserving the source and essence of the question itself, has created its own answers to it. In an article of this length, I am unable to demonstrate by direct reference to their content, to the features of their vision of the notorious subject-object relation, that the swings of the methodological pendulum have described an arc from one extreme, at which the object is posited as essentially alien to the subject and so forever a foundation that is fundamentally different from it, if not hostile to it, to the other extreme, at which despite recognition of the difference between their respective phenomenal series they are on various grounds identified completely with one another. It suffices here for me to refer the reader to another fundamental work of Vygotsky: *History of the Development of the Higher Psychic Functions* [Istoriia razvitiia vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii]. He was able to demonstrate that these extremes corresponded to the views of vulgar materialists-naturalists (for instance, followers of physicalist reflexology) and of spiritualists obsessed with their mystical visions. In the space between the extremes, he found a whole crowd of those who, repelled by spiritualism, had fled to naturalism and those who, from good old vulgar-materialist positions, had resorted in desperation to mysticism. From my point of view, the situation is no different in contemporary psychological “shoot-outs.”

I shall not again disturb the shades of Plato and the neo-Platonists, Kant and Fichte, Husserl and Heidegger. Just one remark: in the philosophical tradition, in my view, victory has gone to the idea, alluring in its profundity, of a *mutual generation*—determining everything from the start—of the object and the subject of productive and creative human life experience, of its time and space, of its *spiritualized* Being.

The objectivity of the perceived and interpreted world is the objectivity of man’s psyche, which forms its “I” precisely in this world. Once more, as in a number of my other works, I shall quote from my beloved Goethe:

There is nothing within us,
For all that is in us is without.

There is only one way to resolve this paradox of human prehistory and history: by rejecting the assumption of their theoretical interpretation that both our animal forebears and we ourselves, in history and in our
personal biographies, are all the time outside of nature, an assumption that counterposes to the objectivity of nature not only our subjectivity, given us from heaven knows where and by heaven knows whom, but also the instruments of labor, signs and symbols, words and “intelligent” things that we ourselves have thought up. It is precisely this assumption that produces those swings of the methodological pendulum of which I spoke above. However, rejecting this assumption requires at least a more or less articulate attempt at formulating a different assumption. And, it seems to me, it is just the philosophical tradition to which I have also referred that provides all the grounds for that assumption.

Anthropogenesis is thus interpreted in this tradition as a process in which the sought-after possibility of man’s voluntary and goal-conforming life-activity is its own cause. (Let us recall the logic of causa sui.) The essence of such a possibility lies precisely in the transformation of the subjective motivation of our distant animal forebear’s behavior. And, as I have tried (extremely briefly) to show, the cause (more precisely, the foundation) of its possible transformation cannot be a mediator between nature and the individuals of our conjectured population, if only because it is precisely the mediator that predetermines the contrary dichotomy and eternally inescapable counterposition and opposition between man’s subjectivity and the objectivity of nature—and the corresponding swings of the pendulum between the extremes of naturalism and spiritualism.

The abstract character of the problem of subject-object interaction lies in the fact that it defines a real relation to nature in terms of the means and modes of that relation, and there is nowhere that they can come from except from nature itself. Inheritance and environment are purely natural products, while labor and language, for all their artificiality, are likewise borrowed from nature: animals too “labor” as they shape their ecological niche. Man’s tools and all the means of human communication are also made out of natural material, just like the means of intragroup communication among the higher animals and the objects that they use to solve situational tasks—sticks, stones, and so on.

If we assume that the transformation of the subjective motivation of our forebears’ behavior occurred in the most object-oriented sphere of subjectivity—that is, in that mutual relation whose object is precisely the externalized subjectivity of the other, then the logic of causa sui will win out over that of mechanistic interaction. As I have been able
to substantiate this assumption in a number of my works, here I shall confine myself to a hint.

It may be considered a miracle that out of the numerous and diverse populations of *Homo* that arose in the Pliocene one (or a few) survived. It is to their appearance that the history of animal species on Earth owes the last aromorphosis of terrestrial biological evolution. [An aromorphosis is a shift in the morphological structure of an organism to a new level of integration. The concept was introduced by the Soviet biologist Severtsov in the 1930s.—Trans.] And, like all other aromorphoses in their time, such as the one that gave the evolutionary process the four-chamber heart, it led to the emergence and scattering of a true “star cluster” of new populations. However, the *last aromorphosis on Earth* had a different result: the “situational intelligence” of higher animal populations became their chief instrument in the struggle for existence. But in this case it led all its populations into a biological dead end, for the modes of solution of various situational tasks found by the “intelligence” of individuals in their ontogenesis are not inherited. This breaks the chief law of evolution—the inheritance of *species-specific* capabilities for survival.

This, apparently, is why not a single one of so many aromorphic populations has been preserved on our planet. Is it really “ours?” For we must consider its preservation, too, none other than a miracle if we continue in naturalistic fashion to take intelligence in general, and situational intelligence all the more so, for the ability to solve vital (situational) tasks by means of cold calculation of variants.

But our intelligence, like the “situational intelligence” of the higher animals, primordially and always, is internally affective. It is sensual and intentional—all the more so given that our intelligence, primordially and always, is addressed not to dead, unthinking, and unfeeling nature (an object) but to the affective-intellectual receptivity of another human being—and always, therefore, to our self as its possessor, who thereby becomes the subject of its own voluntary and goal-conforming activity.

Thus, perhaps in this case we should reformulate the postulate about the relation that generates man: the relation that generates man is none other than the affective meaning-forming relation of our animal forebears first of all to one another, and thereby to a different objectivity. However, their inner conceptions were just as real (really ideal) as the whole of the world around them.
At the same time, account must be taken of the fact that for animals, too, the objective existence of the world around them is indistinguishable from its perception and experience, and fusion with it is a law of their own being. Marx was again right to note that “an animal does not ‘relate’ to anything and in general does not ‘relate’; for an animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation.”

It is very important to understand here that the new relation of our animal forebears, a relation to one another’s subjectivity that generated its own reflexivity, was not in itself capable of transforming the natural factors of their life (for example, of creating instruments of labor), but did turn out to be capable of transforming the subjective behavioral motivation of the other into experience of the self—and the subjective behavioral motivation of the self into experience of the other. Transformation into experience of the other that is identical to experience of the self, transformation into experience of the self that is identical to experience of the other—this means transformation into shared experience, which really and significantly reproduces their emotionally experienced community, in no way predetermined by their instinctive impulses toward one another.

Let me make myself clear by repeating: the music in man’s soul is born only of music, verse of poetry, thought of thought. The real subjectivity of the audible, perceived speech of others (verbal, musical, figurative) sounds within me as my own speech, and only this enables me, by transforming that speech as I address myself and others, to give birth within me to my own speech. And it is not the signification of individual phenomena of external corporeal objectivity that awakens it within me, but the complete fusion of its aural and visual images with the voluntary and goal-conforming actions of others and myself in the experienced objective world of existence, becoming the possession of my soul, that gives birth to the soul that talks with the world. From the start it is fused firmly with the subjectivity of the world of thoughts and feelings of those without whom I would be deaf and dumb to the affectiveness of the meanings of existence—to the living and spiritualized community of people.

Is this not how there emerged the tribe—a fundamentally new type of community of living individuals? For it was certainly not stimulation of instinctive orientation and search by external objects that itself served as the true objectivity of each individual’s self-experience of
his inclusion in this emotional community. Nor, in general, could this function have been fulfilled by the species-specific objectivity of the ecological niche with all its sticks, stones, and so on. Their affective existence in the community that they themselves created was objectified, materialized, and embodied [voploshcheno] (from the word “flesh” [plot']) in the sensuality (perceptibility) of such “objects” as mimicry, pantomime, and voice—properly speaking, all their “talking” corporeality—all that constantly externalized in their corporeality the motive of shared experience in shared action.

This “physiologically triggered” intrasubjective motive of the constant and indispensable reproduction of the intersubjectivity of shared existence appeared before them just as much from without as the form of the stone surface of cave walls or other shelters. And together with the latter it divided the objectivity of the experience of spatial reality into two equal sensually filled extensions: one of them their own shared reliable closedness and protectedness,27 the other a hostile and at the same time a needed openness. Organically interwoven into the first of these were the objects of situational manipulation as “things common to all,” which suddenly began to speak as means of addressing one another, preserving protectedness through shared affect. Thereby they too—just like shelter walls or the living corporeality of the individuals themselves—addressed themselves to each and to all, becoming the first symbols of the community of their affective existence.28

Here, outside of critical situations (self-defense, attack, and so on) that imperiously demand the triggering of instinctive species-specific reactions, the world of sensual existence is inevitably “split in two” by its relation to the self that arises within it. The intersubjectivity of the experience of the protected community, externalized in external objectivity, had to appear visually and sensually before each individual as something other, different from the objects of instinctive need, and at the same time as merging all motives of each individual’s perception and experience into some kind of sensuality that is abstracted from them, in imagination emergent and external, but also deeply intimate, a literally animal sensuality.

This objectivity, this objective sensuality of the entire “makeup,” structured each time in its own way, of the external-internal ties of their community could not but become (and did become, inasmuch as we, people, exist) the material form of a new type of genome, ensuring
the structural capacity of those canons, rules, and modes and means of behavior that were transmitted to new generations and secured their physical life. Usually this mode of inheritance is called external, but I am compelled to refrain from so defining it, for in its inter-intrasubjectivity it is for us just as internal and primordial as a genome of classical genetics.

One fact noted by all anthropologists and paleo-ethnographers has struck me as interesting and important. For a long time, now almost inaccessible to us and comparable in duration (if not coincident) with the geological eras of terrestrial life, the emergent *Homo sapiens*, in transition from one anthropological type to another, made no improvements to what were already his tools— instruments of labor. He carefully carried his famous grooved spear in his hands almost without changes through the millennia. It is possible that at that time he had to devote all the creativity of his nature to the continuous reproduction and improvement of his main instrument and means of survival—the intrasubjectivity of tribal ties.

I shall not enter into any more or less substantiated discussion of the nature of those forces that accompanied this process, gradually bringing the emergent *Homo sapiens* closer to the psychophysiology of Cro-Magnon Man. But it is also possible that no small role in the inherited changes in the “arrangement” of the organism of emergent man was played by the improvement and complication of the entire system of intra-intersubjective motivations of the activity-related preservation of tribal rituals. For it has been noted that classical genetics provides for the exact reproduction of plant species but opens up just a little scope for the creation of new animal species and the inheritance of acquired characteristics among the higher animals, thereby making possible their inheritance in man. However, I shall renounce right away the almost poetic license in this paragraph if it turns out that the French geneticist whom I have quoted without naming is wrong, for I discovered his above-quoted judgment in a popular magazine to which I am not in the habit of referring.

The *causa sui* of the voluntary and goal-conforming character of our always object-oriented life-activity is that only the sensual world of existence that is *addressed to others* (or to the self as to an other) is acutely problematic for the intention to address that is alienated from it. For its essence lies in doubt: will my address be in accordance with that accepted by others (by the affective-semantic intersubjectivity of
their existence) in precisely the—it would seem—true form in which I offer it? This doubt is a guarantee of the inevitable transformation of its affective meanings—the same transformation that we call thinking.

I am not so presumptuous as to consider all that I have said in this article a sufficient basis for the conclusions that now follow. Indeed, the aim of the article was not to present them urbi et orbi as something new. Its aim was formulated in the question of the title: whose is this notorious object-oriented activity? For both the supporters of "the activity paradigm" in psychology and its ardent opponents discuss its cognitive value as a category, counterposing to it other categories. But just try seriously to pose to yourself the question of the title! The answers will put everything in its place, because in psychology, object-oriented activity is, for the present, the activity of man in general. But "man in general" is also a category, behind which is concealed either the individual with his psychophysiology (here, by the way, is the true subject matter of general psychology, which together with philosophy has lost its fundamental basis!) or social man, who is losing his individual uniqueness in the psychology of community (the subject matter of social psychology).

The object-oriented activity of one or another subject, at least if it is oriented toward a wide range of objects, inevitably merges with empirically ascertained forms of the activeness of various people. Moreover, the classification of these forms into "individual" and "social" not only breaks up the sought-after psychology of identity between the intersubjectivity and intrasubjectivity of people’s existence and assigns its pieces to the poles of general (developmental and so on) and social psychology—that is not so important—but also preserves at each of these poles the Cartesian opposition between man’s soul and the body—both his own body and the corporeality of all that is real.

So whose in fact is this object-oriented activity? What I have been trying to say in this article is this: it is the activity of the soul in each of us, which matures within it through the motives of the action, which is always word and deed—deed as word, word as deed. Each action that we take is a deed of the soul, a deed of voluntary and goal-conforming transformation of its true objectivity—of the real ideality of all always material means for the generation, regeneration, improvement, and expanded reproduction of the birth community [rodovaia obshchnost'] of
people. I use the latter term in the sense of the expression “predestined for us at birth” [na rodu nam napisannaia], because for us, human beings, it is the sole possible form of existence, from the primitive tribal community to self-socializing humanity.

Yes, this is the voluntary and goal-conforming activity of our soul, whose eternal and sole possible object is always, in one way or another, the externalized reality of our special, exclusively human inter-intrasubjectivity, which contains the perceived reality of the entire real world outside us. This is the sensuality, which we ourselves reproduce and externalize for one another, of all those who before us and together with us did and do reproduce and purposively change the tension of that semantic-sensual field of our continual addresses to one another, which is sometimes called simply spiritual, and sometimes spiritual-practical, culture—the high or low culture of our life, our life for one another.

Notes

1. Here I retain the customary term.
2. K. Marks [Marx] and F. Engel’s [Engels], Soch. 2d ed., vol. 3 (Moscow, 1955), p. 37. By the way, the idealism of such an approach to the real meaning of real historical phenomena, of which Marx here speaks, is inherent not only in the so-called histmat (historical materialism) of party ideology but also in the majority of the conceptions of contemporary perestroika and post-perestroika ideologists, who also search Russia’s past for none other than categories: the village commune and conciliarity [sobornost’], Orthodoxy, national character [narodnost’], closeness to the soil [pochvennost’], orientation to the West [zapadnichestvo], and so on. One of these (sometimes a symbiosis of two or three) is posited as the basis of a “new national idea” or as an explanatory principle for all past and present events.
3. On the genesis and historical nature of categories and of categorial thinking, see the first chapter of F.T. Mikhailov, Obshchestvennoe soznanie i samosoznanie individa (Moscow: Nauka, 1990).
4. For the purposes of this article, of the synthetic conception of the developing concept of man’s psyche.
5. In the given case, of the discipline of psychology.
6. The list of publications that reflect the time and fluctuating degree of my participation in the disputes is quite long and includes many articles and chapters in monographs. Therefore, I confine myself to referring to the book: F.T. Mikhailov, Izbrannoe (1990—2000 gg.) (Moscow: INDRIK, 2000) and especially to the section “On the Soul” [O dushe], although my position is expressed in no less representative a fashion in all the other sections of the book.
7. In order to prevent misunderstandings from arising between myself and old Marxists, without developing my whole argument in defense of including Marx’s
name in this series, I recall just two of his painfully familiar statements: “The chief deficiency of all preceding materialism (including that of Feuerbach) is that sensed reality is taken only in the form of an object, or in the form of contemplation, and not as sensual-human activity, as practice, not subjectively” (Marks and Engel’s, Soch., vol. 42, p. 261). See also his deliberations to the effect that “the subject is not cognition: it is the subjectivity of objective essential forces.” And further on: “To be real means to be an object of sensing, to be a sensual object—that is, to have outside oneself sensual objects, objects of one’s sensibility” (Marks and Engel’s, Soch., vol. 42, pp. 162, 164). In the same work, there are words even more “terrible” for vulgar materialism to the effect that the world outside of its relation to him (outside of his perception) is not reality.

8. I heard this incantation with my own ears from a psychologist who is well known in our country at a seminar in honor of the memory of V.V. Davydov.

9. By the way, physics has also been undergoing radical “corrections,” especially over the past two years. I have in mind models of physical reality that permit the speed of light to be exceeded without limit; this clearly points to an anti-Einsteinian counterrevolution, which is just as difficult to accept today as it was difficult or simply impossible to accept the physical model of reality at the beginning of the twentieth century.

10. With your permission, I shall not give my own assessments of those “variants” of faith in the supernatural origin of man of which some publicists from science who have grown completely disillusioned with science have begun suddenly to speak.

11. In essence, that is, reducing the problem of foundation to one of the poorest categories—the category of interaction.

12. “Situational intelligence,” “object-oriented thinking”—these metaphors successfully conceal the multiplicity of meanings of the terms intelligence and thinking. “Artificial intelligence” belongs to the same series of metaphors, which are useful at the outset of investigation but distract and confuse those who take the metaphorical meaning for an adequately substantiated concept—that is, for a thinkable reality developed into a conception the productivity of which has been verified. In the case of intelligence and thinking, unfortunately, there is still no such conception.

13. I think that the time has come to understand that the vulgar-mechanistic interpretation of “the transformation of quantity into quality” has nothing in common with the source from which it was thoughtlessly taken. I refer, of course, to Hegel’s Science of Logic. In Hegel, the so-called quantitative changes of directly present existence merely prepare the conditions for the rise within it of that which negates the mode of its spontaneous reproduction, and the new mode, its opposite in all respects, reproduces a different “directly present existence.” And—the most difficult point for the mechanist—thereby the new arises on its own foundation (causa sui). A different mode of presence in existence, opposite to that by which the old realized itself, serves as this foundation. I shall discuss below how this different mode of generation and reproduction of the new is possible within the old.

15. By means of which the given relation is realized.
16. After all, even Plato’s *mnemosis* has no direct connection with the favor of the gods, and in the ideal world—which, by the way, possesses, like everything within it, corporeality, albeit of the most delicate and indestructibly eternal kind—the truths (prototypes) of things coexist on equal terms with the gods.
19. His analysis, which is impressive in both the depth and the scope of its coverage of all the conceptions of man’s psyche that were influential at that time in, moreover, almost all their specializations, can also be boldly applied to the majority of current conceptions.
20. As subject of his own voluntary and goal-conforming life-activity.
22. Tools, language, symbols, signs, and then texts of a developed culture, and so forth.
24. Again I remind the reader that use of the word *intelligence* in combination with the word *situational* is incorrect (or at best metaphorical). This usage preserves the hidden hope that there can be a direct line of development from the involuntary behavior of animals to the voluntary and goal-conforming behavior of man.
26. And, alas, it is not only teachers who still reduce the theory and practice of the teaching of speech to this procedure.
27. Such is the coziness, so familiar to us from our early childhood, of the “cave” made out of divan cushions, or of the shelter built in the bushes of intertwined branches, which firmly shut us off from the world of the grownups.
28. Hunger, the call of sex, the acute sense of danger, and all the object-external compasses of instinctive search in animals (and savage people) are equally *internally external*. They are *intrasubjective* to the extent that food, an individual of the opposite sex, and the thingness of danger and orientation are equally *intersubjective* for them. But for them too the objectively external is a perceived subjective motive of action only because, being predetermined by instinct, it is internally “anticipated.” And, in general, animals have not progressed to such an absurdity as the counterposition of their internal *vision* of the external world in the form of *knowledge* of it to this primordially alien world.
29. The first *Homo sapiens* known to us, whose differences from contemporary man may boldly be likened to racial differences.
30. The reduction of people’s creation through object-oriented activity of their world and themselves manifests itself with especial clarity in the English language usage of many (and not only American) supporters of “the activity approach in psychology.” Their general use of the English word “active” sometimes makes them regard as a problem even the degree of activeness of a teacher teaching a lesson—a problem, moreover, to be solved exclusively “in the Vygotskian manner,” although the psychologist who studied it needed nothing except tables to measure the degree of exertion of the teacher’s will and intelligence (my impression from
a presentation at a conference). [Here the author attributes the tendency of anglophone scholars toward a reductionist understanding of the activity approach to confusion arising from the fact that the Russian word *deiatel’nost’*, which for lack of a better English word has to be rendered as “activity,” does not correspond exactly in meaning to the latter. The specific aspect of this linguistic discrepancy that the author has in mind is that *deiatel’nost’*, unlike “activity”—or its closest Russian equivalent *aktivnost’*, which I render as “activeness”—does not imply any minimum degree of exertion. The same point applies to related forms, such as the adjectival *deiatel’nnyi* and *aktivnyi* for “active.”—Trans.]