

F.T. MIKHAILOV

## **Problems of the Method of Cultural-Historical Psychology**

### **By way of confession**

The article has turned out to be about the author rather than about the content declared in the title that was ordered. But problems of the method of a theory that does not exist—that is also patent nonsense.

First of all, in heartfelt torment I establish that cultural-historical psychology has turned into a myth. Many psychologists use the terminology of L.S. Vygotsky to create an elegant impression, while formulating their personal scientific problems in the logic of patent empiricism. Psychology is dominated by methods of practical correction of psychic anomalies. Fashionable concepts of psychoanalysis and tests and exercises have displaced the very idea of cultural historicism in the formation of the highest psychic functions of the wise organism *Homo sapiens*.

But the essence of the crisis of developmental psychology lies not only in its empiricist orientation. The personal pretensions of psychologists who draw the younger generation behind them play

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not the least role in this crisis. I shall name only the chief claimants to the title of teacher of narrowly professional psychological wisdom. It is not easy for me to name them, for all of them, named here or not, are my once young and now my old, beloved, and valued friends, with whom I have spent not one decade in both disputes and agreement. Before others, they are B.D. Elkonin, V.V. Rubtsov, V.I. Slobodchikov, and V.S. Lazarev. May those whom I have not yet named forgive me, but I think that in this instance they will be only grateful to me for my “forgetfulness.”

Each of the chosen lays claim to loyalty to his teachers. More than once we have had to hear, for example, from Boris Elkonin: “They taught us our unique profession—we are psychologists, but not philosophers, god forbid, and not theoreticians without limits.” It turns out that neither Spinoza nor Locke, nor Kant, nor Hegel has anything to do with psychology. Nor, especially, does Karl Marx, with whom many psychologists are unable to cope, so that they simply have nothing to recall about him. However, it was precisely their teachers who were open to all philosophical wisdom, including Marx.

It is tempting to assume the pose of a teacher of narrowly professional psychology, but it is also easy to drop that pose. However, this danger recedes to the background when you very much want to play a little at schools of your own, consoling yourselves with the hope that all your listeners will draw the same coveted picture: loyalty to teachers as the earned right to play the role of teacher oneself. But where is this loyalty of yours today? Only the banner, only the symbol—no more. And if there are direct references to the works of A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luria, L.I. Bozhovich, D.B. Elkonin, P.Ia. Galperin—Vasia Davydov’s teacher (and mine), A.V. Zaporozhets, A.A. Smirnov, N.A. Menchinskaia, and others, then they are a tribute of respect but not of businesslike criticism, without which theory does not move forward. Those are the kind of doubts that urgently demanded to be shared with you.

I should add that my allusion to the difficult problems of the “new teachers” refers neither to V.P. Zinchenko, who chose his path long ago,<sup>1</sup> nor to my beloved L.F. Obukhova, who anxiously

and productively develops the ideas of her teacher—Petr Iakovlevich Galperin. I would also set apart G.A. Tsukerman, who has developed her own promising approach in theoretical psychology.

### **Engineers of human souls**

I would call the orientation of problems of theoretical psychology toward the practice of correction of psychic anomalies professional narrow-mindedness. It stands in contrast to the sharp and uncompromising Karl Marx, who not only called the closing-in of theory upon the technology of its “subdivisions” *professional cretinism*, but also analyzed its historical-cultural, economic, and social causes, acting since the sixteenth century with the factory exploitation of fundamental discoveries in mechanics, and later in physics, chemistry, biology, and so on. The eyes of the victims not of clinical but of professional cretinism, long since equipped with special “spectacles” that so constrict the field of vision that the chief goal of exploration of the secrets of mother nature becomes the scrutiny of mutual transformations of specific elements within this field. Thus has the logic of “creeping empiricism” emerged and taken root in our time. None of the pretentious novelties of the so-called philosophy of science go beyond the bounds of this logic.

But I would like to draw your attention not only to the empiricist logic of the science that patiently serves the means and goals of technogenic civilization. There is another aspect of its service—namely, the stimulation of public awareness of the role not even so much of scientists as of the engineers who turn the scientists’ formulas of the objective processes of existence into the reproductive work of machines and mechanisms, changing both the face of the planet and the souls of its inhabitants.

Let us recall the beginning of the previous century. The heroes of *fantasy* novels and stories, of social utopias and quasi-scientific prophecies were, not by chance, engineers! Yes, those same “white coats,” at that time still privileged who (at least in our country) were destined by the middle of the twentieth century to turn into

the luckless heroes of Arkadii Raikin's sketches, living "like some engineer!"—the losers receiving the wages of an engineer, whose social position is marginal and whose way of life is rapidly approaching penury.

The figure of the lone engineer, creating and putting into effect the technologies of future machines, of space flights, and of social systems for humanity (invariably once and for all), had already faded by the 1940s. But at the beginning of the century the glory of the professional engineer, desired for a projected future, was no coincidence. Let us recall, for instance, the engineers of Jules Verne and those of A.A. Bogdanov (Malinovskii) in his novels *Engineer Menni* [Inzhener Menni] and *Red Star* [Krasnaia zvezda]. And also, alongside them, the engineers of A.N. Tolstoy (Los' in *Aelita*, Garin in *The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin* [Giperboloid inzhenera Garina]). These and many other heroes of the novels and stories of that time left their readers in no doubt: the future belongs to those who design and create mechanical—and then chemical, biochemical, physical, and technical—machines and "machines" of the social arrangement of people's lives. Their exploitation will create a true heaven on earth for us all.

"The mechanics of the interaction between the parts of these machines—that is the whole object of analysis and the result of inventions that serve people." Such is the subtext of the self-consciousness of our epoch, guiding all texts of the natural and social sciences, of the ideologists of politics, and of the bases of all "subdivisions" of the general science of man, including contemporary psychology. The object field of the numerous "subdivisions" of psychology encompasses precisely the mechanics of the "interactions" between the psychic states, fixed ideas, and painful experiences present in the individual, requiring engineering correction.<sup>2</sup>

And the corresponding *specializations* of psychology, each closed in upon itself, are now so numerous that two or three pages of this article would be needed just to enumerate them. But now it is not only writers but, even ahead of the latter, precisely

psychologists who lay claim to the title of *engineers of human souls*! Precisely to the title of engineers, engaged in studying and fine-tuning normal, and repairing damaged, mechanisms of our soul's work.

And this is how psychology reverted to the Cartesian counterposition of the soul, with its own special spiritual “mechanics,” to the inescapable corporeality of the world and of man, with its purely physical mechanics. And this made it necessary to bring in a Creator to explain the basis and causes of the existence and functioning in the world of being of a purely subjective substance. For Cartesianism this is inevitable! Here the logic of Descartes was supplemented by the mechanical logic of rooting in the basis of the entire social order the *political power* of the state of the bureaucrats. There are no grounds for so rooting their power, and therefore it requires ideological—which in this case can only be *religious*—sanctification.

### **Some purely personal impressions**

It is not at all by chance that the Catholic idea of state Orthodoxy is present in the mentality of state serfdom that has shackled Russia for at least three hundred years.<sup>3</sup> And this despite the fact that the majority of citizens of Russia consider themselves members of other confessions—Islam, Buddhism, the Old Belief, Judaism, and so on. Here I cannot but recall S.N. Bulgakov, one of the most faithful and fervently believing priests of precisely the Orthodox Church! Before his exile to Istanbul, and especially in Istanbul and later in Paris, Sergei Nikolaevich dreamt of the fusion of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. And not at the state level, but in human souls. I remind the reader also that one of Dostoevsky's heroes, Versilov, according to rumor became a Catholic. Moreover, a family of renowned contemporary philosophers, in the not distant past Marxists, suddenly went over to the faith of the Apostle Paul. And this is not an isolated case. I know another two families of newly converted Catholics. This, apparently, is not coincidental

for our “democracy.” For the Catholic Church from days of old has laid claim to state power, creating insoluble problems for both the church and the state. Let us recall, by the way, the article of Ivan Karamazov and its discussion in a monastery.

In recent years, state policy has insistently proclaimed the false idea of orthodoxy as the indigenous culture of Russia, although our culture has retained a great deal from paganism. But the main point is that the Western world has been shaken not by “Father” Pavel Florenskii, not by Berdiaev or Rozanov, but by the supreme achievements of Russia’s *secular culture*. Radishchev, Novikov, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky (who in torment forced himself toward faith, but gave god back his ticket to heaven because of the innocent tears of a child), Chekhov, Stanislavsky, the brilliant poets of Russia’s Silver Age, M.A. Bulgakov, Sholokhov, our artists, our composers! So then, are we to throw them all onto the trash heap of history?

It looks as though the answer will be yes. The introduction of lessons in orthodoxy in the schools, the ritual orthodoxy of the president, his “fatherly” participation in church holidays—all is subordinated to the idea of the fusion of the civil power with the institutional and spiritual power of the church. But this very fusion is more than dangerous: it contains a threat of totalitarianism. No longer, perhaps, merely a threat. This is borne out by the trial and harsh punishment, in contravention of the Constitution of the RF and the law on the separation of church and state, of the organizers of the exhibition “Beware, Religion” [Ostorozhno, religiia]. Faith in god is guarded by the state, and atheism is persecuted.<sup>4</sup>

I ask the reader to bear in mind here that my attitude to the sincere faith of many of my friends and acquaintances is one of sympathy and understanding. Their faith makes it easier for them to live in our insane, bloody, and confusing world. Indeed, my own ancestors were also frenzied believers—true, Old Believer dissenters. My grandfather, Vasilii Leontievich Mikhailov, as I realized once on meeting with his fellow townsmen, is revered to this day, virtually as a saint, for during his life he was the leader of the South Urals community of Old Believers (in the town of

Kurtamysh and the surrounding areas). He won arguments with emissaries of the Moscow Patriarchate, undertook a pilgrimage to the Lord's grave, and almost struck down his elder son Kharlampii with an axe for asking the innocent question: how could the Virgin Mary have remained a virgin, having given birth not only to Jesus?

By the way, regarding the reason why I do not write the word "god" with an initial capital. For all those who have suddenly awoken to faith, the "Lord" has become a state personage. After all, I do not write the word "president" with a capital letter! But in fact I am simply obliged to write "God." *State* grammar obliges me so to do. It is also true that in our country everything, absolutely everything, belongs to the state. Public affairs, civic affairs do not take root in Russia.

But let us return to psychology and psychologists. However, it is worth referring first to physiologists. I.P. Pavlov, a mechanicist to the marrow of his bones, did not bring god into his procedures for inducing conditioned reflexes in dogs. His faith, if it was sincere and not demonstratively anti-Soviet, was his personal affair and had no impact on his experiments. But the return of psychology to the polarization between the corporeality of the world and the human organism and his subjective mentality, the return to Descartes simply demands the participation of a creator in the formation of the subjectivity of the motives of the behavior of *Homo sapiens*.

By way of anecdotes, I shall convey some stories that I was told by an old friend of mine who was then an associate of the Leningrad Division of the Institute of the Brain of the USSR Academy of Sciences. However, while clearly farfetched, her stories did confirm the historical truth of the research orientation led at that time by Academician Bekhtereva. Here is a vivid recent example of such confirmation.

At the end of last year, in the "Galitsino" guesthouse, Iu.N. Afanas'ev conducted a multiday conference of the Russian State Humanitarian University (RGGU). I took part in it with the rights of a spy in the land of Canaan. I was simply present—"without a tongue." The conference was crowned by the traditional buffet

banquet. I was standing by a table of psychologists when suddenly I was embraced by a stranger. And he began to cry out to the entire hall: "Here he is, my savior! Here's the man to whom I owe my new life!" His raptures continued until the end of the banquet. He literally dragged me from table to table, telling everyone the same story. Briefly, here is the essence of his raptures.

He had graduated from the Second Medical Institute at a time when I was head of its philosophy department (as I am now—true, on a half-time basis). I was living then by teaching the history of philosophy under the guise of dialectical and historical materialism. He had been assigned to the Institute of the Brain and was proud of it. But not for long, for after reading my booklet *The Riddle of the Human I* [Zagadka chelovecheskogo Ia] he had suddenly understood that the research at the Institute of the Brain was "complete eyewash."<sup>5</sup> He became a psychiatrist. It was therein that he saw his "salvation."

He repeated this story many times, explaining in passing what exactly Academician Bekhtereva was up to at that time. He thus confirmed the farfetched nature of her research, of which I was already aware: the search in the neurons of the cerebrum for the words concealed in them. The head of this mighty institute was already prepared to assert that the soul possesses mass and, consequently, also weight. Therefore, supposedly, the body of a dead person is just a tiny bit lighter than the body of a living person—by exactly the weight of the departed soul! There is an example for you of the most vulgar materialism, requiring in addition to its vulgarity a material embodiment of man's subjective mentality! It is also logical that today Academician Bekhtereva should believe fervently in the Orthodox god. After all, even a "material" soul has to fly off somewhere. Where? Where else can it go, poor thing, if not to god? As creator of the ideal substance of thinking he is simply essential, not only to the vulgar-materialist physiologist but also to the Cartesian psychologist.

The psychologists overlooked one simple fact, as simple as the bellowing of a cow: all bodily performances of the human organism are *subordinate to their subjective motivation*. In place of the search

for an answer to the question “how is this possible?” the somatic predetermination of the individual’s psychological development was understood as a caprice of his individual genetics. That is why they resurrected the idea of the “struggle” for the fate of the individual between heredity and the natural and social environment external to him—in direct opposition to the cultural-historical approach, which knows no other “environment” but that of speech.

Here I shall permit myself a quotation from a work of V.V. Bibikhin, who died before his time:

The communicative act exists because there is something to communicate, and not the other way round, with people looking for something to convey once communication and its means exist. At the beginning of communication and society there stands the piece of news. It tells of an event that has occurred or is occurring. Language, before all else and in its initial essence, is already present in communication, and it is through communication that the act of communication acquires sense. Seen in this light, language is not so much a means as that environment itself, that space unfolded by the event and by the news of it, motion within which turns out to be not without sense. If communication is not one occupation of man among others but his mode of self-realization in the encounter with others, then language, which is presupposed by communication, is the environment and space of our historical existence, in the same way as the natural biological surroundings of animals are the environment and space of their existence. Man realizes himself and his history is made not so much within his natural surroundings as in the environment of language, taken not in its special lexicon and grammar but in its essence, communication. The definition of language as “the means of human communication” does not stand on its feet and, as it diffuses, leaves us with another, which is not so much a definition as a riddle: language in its essence, or news, is the environment in which man’s historical being is realized.<sup>6</sup>

## **I cannot forgive!**

Instead of this position, so natural for the cultural-historical logic of Vygotsky, we have a heterogeneous collection of the real abstractions that abound in the life activity of man. We have orientation,

and irritability, and reactivity, and the search for the other outside and within the self as *encounter*, without which there is no act of motion and development of the psyche.

However, I can find no explanation for the crude distortion of the history of the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Education in the booklet published on the one-hundredth anniversary of the institute, except the authors' claims to their own scientific significance. In this booklet that has so crudely distorted the institute's history (apart from the first period of its creation and flourishing) Davydov is mentioned in passing as one of the directors of the institute. It is possible that this was to someone's advantage, but . . .

But my friends whom I named above—currently teachers of psychology that is closed in upon itself—are all former graduate students of V.V. Davydov! It was he who gave them the freedom of personal creativity, he who supported their first steps in science! How could they have reconciled themselves to the falsification of a very important and glorious period of its history?!

Here is the gist of the matter. My relation to the institute is not that of a bystander: for ten years under Davydov I was head of the theoretical laboratory, a member of the Scientific Council, a department head, and so on and so forth. In these years members of my laboratory included Volodia Bibler(!), Tolia Arsen'ev(!), Sasha Tolstykh—the future academician and director of the Institute of Artistic Education of the Russian Academy of Education, Igor Vinogradov—former head of a department at Tvardovskii's journal *Novyi mir*, driven out for not signing a lampoon against Academician A.D. Sakharov, and blind and deaf graduates of the psychology faculty of Moscow State University (at that time a sensation!). Responsible editor of the State Political Publishing House [Gospolitizdat] Eduard Viktorovich Bezcherevnykh also worked in our laboratory on a half-time basis.

As our laboratory assistant we recruited, in accordance with Davydov's decision, Sasha Surmava, about whose works I shall talk later. Previously, as a result of persecution by the KGB, he

had been a stoker in the boiler room at the Institute of Psychology, and then served as cloakroom attendant. L. Radzikhovskii was also a member of the laboratory. He used to make frequent presentations at seminars, speaking at length and pretty much to the point. But when Vasia [Davydov] was expelled from the party and “at his own request” left the post of institute director to head the small Laboratory of the Thinking of the Preschool Child at the Institute of Preschool Education under the wing of our mutual friend N.N. Pod”iakov, Leonid [Radzikhovskii] started coming out with accusations against our laboratory at meetings of the Institute of Psychology: “In all the years of its existence, the laboratory has contributed nothing to science.” Now he is a well-known politoluch. (This is not a misprint: this is my word for one of the professional political technologists who are able to “transform” a nonentity into a member of the Duma, a member of the government, and so on.)

It was, incidentally, precisely at this time that our laboratory was preparing for publication the book *Psychological-Pedagogical Problems of Education* [Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie problemy obrazovaniia] (twenty-one printer’s sheets). When the manuscript of the book was discussed at a specially created commission, one woman from Leningrad—an academician, by the way—burst into tears (literally). “I won’t allow *Soviet pedagogy* to be mocked!” The decision of the commission was that the book should be abridged and that members of the academy should not refer to it. When the book came out, of the twenty-one sheets just seven remained! The funniest thing was that the three chapters written by A.S. Arsen’ev, which had outraged all the members of the commission, were published, while, for example, my chapter on the historicism of psychological-pedagogical thought, which was much more tranquil and academic, was cut to two pages! That’s how it appeared: the chapter heading, one page, and then right away another chapter written by a different author—E.V. Bezcherevnykh. But even in this form the book produced a sensation: colleagues from Prague published magnificent reviews, and there was also a

stream of laudatory reviews from the Russian “backwoods”—from the universities in Krasnoiarsk, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, and other cities. Not long before his demise Vasia [Davydov] republished this book, regarding it as topical even today.

But that too is not the main thing. The main thing is that all these years Moscow-wide theoretical seminars took place monthly in a jam-packed large psychology auditorium. Lecturers included Galperin, A.N. Leontiev, E.V. Ilyenkov, V.S. Bibler, Andrei Brushlinskii (if I could only find his killer, I’d tear him to pieces!), A.A. Bodalev (who demanded that Teplov, Lomov, and the other Lenin-graders be recognized and exalted equally with Vygotsky), G.P. Shchedrovitskii, your obedient servant, and many others. Rigorous, uncompromising discussions of the lectures stirred up the participants; we used to live then from seminar to seminar. But this too was not all!

And what skits the young associates of the institute thought up and performed with such sparkle! Even today, when on one or another pretext the recordings of those skits are played in the auditorium, the joy and laughter of the return to the days of our youth gladdens the hearts of us “oldsters.” Is it really not marvelous suddenly to see how Davydov himself, not by prior arrangement but on impulse, used to run out onto the stage and sing his favorite songs at the top of his voice, to the whole auditorium? *The Hobo Escaped from Sakhalin* [Bezhai brodiaga s Sakhalina], *Sheep-Candies* [Konfety-baranochki], and other songs. And again!

President of the Pedagogical Academy V.N. Stoletov ordered that the two most talented, perhaps, professor-lecturers of Moscow State University be removed from teaching the candidate’s minimum in philosophy to graduate students of the academy, and appointed Arsen’ev and myself in their place. There were very many graduate students at the Academy; they were divided into three groups. And each Monday Tolia and I would read our lecturers for three hours to each group. (I got two groups and lectured after Anatolii for six hours without a break.) So this is how it was: today’s teachers of youth, all those whom I listed above, were graduate students at the time and not only attended those lectures,

but—or at least Elkonin, Slobodchikov, Rubtsov, others too—contrived after hearing Arsen'ev's lecture to stay on for my first lecture. They said: "Arsen'ev hammers in the nails—iron logic, but you, Feliks Trofimovich, get carried away with emotion, though what you and he say is almost the same." They were young, cheerful, and enthusiastic. Philosophy for them was an open and vital culture of thought. Indeed, they had an amazing example to emulate—Vasia Davydov himself. I have already written somewhere about my own discovery of Davydov (and this was after we had already been friends for two decades!).

Once we decided to abduct Eval'd Ilyenkov from the seminar that he was then conducting at the Psychology Faculty of Moscow State University. Either we wanted to knock back a drink together, or we missed his company. We went. If memory does not lead me astray, Sasha Surmava was giving a lecture on the philosophy of Spinoza.<sup>7</sup> We sit and wait. Suddenly Vasia asks Eval'd: let me speak. And for about twenty minutes Vasia talks about Spinoza! And how! Creatively, in a fashion that was new to me, with the superlative textual knowledge of a man in love with Spinoza! I could not believe my ears: who is this "my Vasia," as Eval'd Ilyenkov liked to call him? A philosopher by the grace of god? A psychologist without limits, a broad-profile theoretician?

And then after that freedom of thought and creative atmosphere in the institute for which we are indebted to Davydov, his pupils calmly accepted the exclusion from the history of the institute of the time that had made them psychologists.

So I want to splash out my feelings in the words of the song by Vladimir Vysotsky: And neither church nor tavern—nothing is sacred! No, lads, it won't do, it just won't do, lads! Ah, again, again, and yet again . . . we shall repeat the words that Apostle Peter uttered thrice before the cock's first cry.

### **And now—about the present**

Paying no heed to the difficulties of moving around the planet occasioned by grave illness, I attended the last seminar of Boris

Elkonin's laboratory. Its goal was to draw up the results of the first stage of realization of the general conception of the Elkonin-Davydov school and to determine the path of further development of that conception in the practice of these schools. In the introductory part of his orientation report, the absolute master not only of the laboratories but also of the entire program of their development, Boris Elkonin, established that the first stage of the program had been successfully completed. The task was to substantiate the next stage theoretically.

My commentary: as coordinator and expert of another movement, the "Eureka" movement, I am not unfamiliar with the work of the 600 schools—the experimental sites of the Russian Federation. Among them there are many schools working to the Elkonin-Davydov curriculum. I assert that what has happened in and with these schools is what Vasilii Vasil'evich [Davydov] predicted in his reply to Menchinskaia. A delightful result has been obtained: the theory exists in isolation and practice corresponds nominally to theory. It is not for nothing that after Boris's report to the meeting of "Eureka" experts, in which he purported to demonstrate the possibility of an organic link between "Eureka" and the schools working on the Elkonin-Davydov system, the leadership of the "Eureka" schools network declared: "We will not share our path with a defunct movement."

As regards the second stage, that of the theoretical elaboration of educational curricula, I did not, frankly speaking, quite understand its theoretical purpose. He drew three lines on the blackboard, indicating somehow on each, by means of interconnected points, something theoretically significant. Boris's lexicon was equally complicated. And I understood only what was defined as the theoretical basis of further development of the Elkonin-Davydov schools. It is possible that the latter must be the conception of the *step in development* as a *unit* (the starting point of all theory). A step in development is a transition from the *ideal* image that the child has assimilated of the object presented to him to its new *reality*—to the solution of new tasks and examples that fix in the

memory the verbal definition of rules that are new to the child. So it will be in practice, although Boris presupposes something different. In the final reckoning—the merging of theory with the practice of teaching, which in reality is more like training.

And this is not by chance. I was an opponent at the defense of his doctoral thesis and an attentive reader of his book. At the defense ceremony I said that the members of the specialized council were present not only at the defense of a doctoral thesis but at the birth of a new and very promising psychological-pedagogical theory. For I was and remain an irreconcilable enemy of the empiricism and empty abstractions that serve as the axioms of other approaches to the most important problem of psychology—the problem of the self-development of human subjectivity, which motivates the entire life activity of *Homo sapiens*. The intentions of Boris's thesis permitted me to believe so in Boris and to speak so of him.

But I am no less an irreconcilable enemy of special elaborations of the professional thesaurus that are closed in upon themselves. My task as their critic should have been made easier by a clear presentation of the authors' conclusions at the end of his book *Introduction to Developmental Psychology*.<sup>8</sup> However, it is also no coincidence that the almost deliberate complexity and modernist refinement of the author's lexicon is hard to penetrate.

Boris's first thesis is as follows: "The general and abstract representation of the act of development is its representation, coming from L.S. Vygotsky, as a correlation of real and ideal forms."<sup>9</sup> This is none other than a claim to definition of the axiom of a new theory, but . . .

We do indeed encounter in Vygotsky the concept of ideal and real forms of each act of creation of new senses. And he wrote quite a lot about the semiotic mediation of subject–subject communication, although at the very beginning of his life's work. But in his last, "Spinozan" works the idea of semiotic mediation is supplanted by the concept of the intersubjective speech field. Incidentally, I have had occasion more than once in my own works to

demonstrate that the soul knows no mediators. The dynamic identity of intersubjectivity and intrasubjectivity confirms the truth of Goethe's aphorism: we have nothing within us, all that is within is on the outside. We have "on the outside" the subjectivity of the world of speech, of the world of thought, for each of us lives purposively and willfully, turning to this world for co-feeling, co-thought, and co-action. The "unit" of the psychic sought after by Boris Elkonin is not the *step* in development but the *act of communication, the act of addressing others and addressing the self as some kind of other*. Hence, again, Kant is right when he asserts that we are filled equally with delight by the stars above us and by the moral sense within us. Heinrich Rickert is also right to regard the moral sense or conscience as the first basis of knowledge.

Thus, the main thesis of Boris's theory, which purports to be the axiom of a new theory, is chosen arbitrarily. And not very felicitously: to reduce the creative act of positing oneself as an individual in the capacity of subject of development to the dynamic of transitions between ideal and real forms of subjective development means to exploit one of a number of possible abstractions. But not to address the true problem of the general study of man, including psychology: *how did the exclusively subjective motivation of the entire volitional and purposive life activity of man become possible?*

Moreover, I must note that *the ideal and the real are not psychological categories*. They are developed *measures* of the thinkability of some kind of *something*. Arsen'ev in his lectures (addressed to Boris among others) used to "hammer in the nails" and jeer at the empiricist and naturalist definition of the ideal and the material. He used to declare, with full competence, that in philosophy there is no idealism or materialism of any kind. There is only the investigation of categories. Let me add that it was precisely Hegel who remained incomprehensible while technogenic naturalism was dominant in philosophy itself. His "philosophy of nature" is by no means the subordination of natural processes to the logic of categories, but a demonstration of the fact that all our

judgments concerning nature are subordinate to *measures* of the thinkability of its being. What “exists or does not exist,” is “nearer or farther,” “essential or not essential,” “ideal or real,” and so on—these are not forms of reality itself, but only semantic *measures* of its mastery by thinking.

To say that the real and the ideal are forms of motion of human subjectivity “objectively” inherent in the psyche of man means either to say nothing or to say something like the following: the square, the hypotenuse, and the infinitesimal really exist in nature and only awareness of their objective reality turns them into measures of the thinkable world. Thus, **the real and the ideal are an ordinary categorial (measure) pair, the inner contradiction of which is the moving force of any thought.**

I anticipate that you will appeal to Kant’s third antimony of pure reason: the ideal is real and the real is ideal because the search for new meaning in the searching motion of thought itself relies upon an ideal model—upon a Platonic idea.<sup>10</sup> But an “image” (model) is a reality of the semantic basis of thought’s search for a new measure of the thinkable that will correspond more closely to *intention*. For this reason alone the real and the ideal, like all other *measures of thinkability* of any thinkable object, cannot suddenly become psychological (from a professional point of view) categories.

Yes, the author quite correctly understands the subject not as an idealized (imaginable, thinkable) object but as the *subject of a completed action*. “Subjectivity is a specific life regime and not a characteristic of an observed individual.” Very well said! But the whole “mechanics” of the mutual transformation of ideal and real *forms* takes us away from the chief question of the theory of human existence. Let us recall Bibikhin’s “piece of news”—there is the true continuation of the ideas of Vygotsky, who throughout his creative career criticized himself and what he had established.

And now concerning Boris’s father—the classical psychologist, Vygotsky’s pupil and friend.

I have had good luck throughout my life, both as regards friends

and with my work—in general, with everything. A very big piece of good luck has been my communication over many years with Daniil Borisovich Elkonin. It so happened that we were being thrown together all the time—in the compartment of the train that took us now to Prague, now to Berlin, in delegations, or just the two of us on our own. This last circumstance is explained by the fact that Stoletov included only us on the editorial board of the textbook *Pedagogics* [Pedagogika], which was published jointly by two academies of pedagogical sciences—ours and the [East] German. We had frequent occasion to take part in the work of the editorial board.<sup>11</sup>

Once the Germans were unable to get us tickets to Moscow and after giving us money for our living expenses left us in a room at the hotel of the GDR Council of Ministers. For five days or so, disturbed by no one, we loafed around Berlin on our own, visited all the magnificent museums, and went to cinemas (I translated for D.B.). We were also at an operatic performance of *Carmen*, the stage director of which, the renowned [Walter] Felsenstein, had created a five-hour “fruit salad” out of the text of [Prosper] Mérimée and the opera of [Georges] Bizet. Our Galina Pisarenko sang and played Mikaela magnificently in the Berlin dialect, just as though she and all her forebears had lived their lives precisely in Berlin.

As you will understand, we had more than enough time for heart-to-heart theoretical conversations. And I made full use of that time. Disputes flared up frequently. Especially frequently I attacked D.B., desperately criticizing his idea of leading activities at different ages. On the following grounds: I was unable to accept the transitions from the play of preschool children, brilliantly analyzed by D.B., to learning activity, and in the teens from learning activity to the search for the self in various adolescent and adult communities, because these are transformed, socially codified forms of the child’s real development. I insisted that in various historical and contemporary sociocultural communities other forms of so-called socialization have prevailed or do prevail. Children become adults

both among the Gypsies, who do not know schools, and among American Indians living on reservations, and among other peoples whose traditions are incomparable with European traditions. The psychologist does not have the right to confine himself to his immediate surroundings.

D.B. would reply: I am an experimental psychologist. I deal with what exists. I do not have the right to think up laws of maturation for peoples with whose lives I am familiar only from literature.

On one occasion, as soon as we had entered our train compartment, D.B. told me with delight of a discovery that had been suggested to him by the behavior of his grandson. “I was sitting at work and felt like a drink. I asked my four-year-old grandson, who was busy with some child’s game of his own, to bring me a cup and saucer with cooled-down tea from the newspaper table. In delight he spun round to the table, grabbed the cup and saucer in his arms, and paying no further attention to his burden successfully brought it to me. You had to see his eyes, his smile to understand: I was needed by the child; by all that which is called the life of his organism he was an affective challenge to me, an *address* to me, offered to my attention by all his child’s subjectivity!” The conclusion of the classic of psychology followed: man lives in a world of senses and affects, addressed to himself and addressed by him to others, and not by the objects of so-called *object-related activity*. Later D.B. published his discovery in one of the issues of the psychology series of *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta*. Such was the act by which Daniil Borisovich returned to the teaching of his friend and teacher—L.S. Vygotsky.

And somehow everything suddenly became clear: there exists a different, informal law of the child’s development that is subordinate to the social forms of technogenic civilization, and it is psychologically natural for the child to be dependent on the ocean of speech of adults and children, who present to him their own unique personalities (precious to him or simply essential). And then instead of the strict Mariia Ivanovna in the school of formal teaching he will encounter a different structure of the new stage of his

life that has nothing to do with classes and lessons, such as, for example, the form of the *cultural-educational center*. Uniting children and adults in a single task that is necessary and interesting to them personally—that of mastering various streams of culture, including handicraft and occupational culture, such a center would offer him the possibility of personal choice. In this case, “learning activity” as understood by Elkonin and Davydov would cease to exist. For here we would have living communication and not learning activity of the child in accordance with artificial schemas for mastering the language of the object rather than speech in his own language.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the logic of Boris Elkonin, I would cite the example of the creation of a different, truly philosophical, or—more precisely—general theoretical logic. Here I would refer the reader to the latest numerous psychological works of Surmava, who provided a fundamental proof that the behavioristic or, more precisely, the Cartesian polarization of the spatially and temporally extended being of nature, with its unquestionable objectivity, and the subjective mentality of man’s psyche are two things as mutually incompatible as genius and villainy.

It is precisely this villainy that transforms subjectivity into a special substance requiring supernatural—in essence, divine—creation. Surmava’s logic is the logic of natural genesis from the “cell” of the future organism that reproduces itself exclusively by the volitional motion of its internal organs. He rejected any abstract idea that manifested itself in the description and investigation of the psychic as some kind of developed and present *subjective reality* objectively inherent in life. A reality understood as the spirit of culture and the soul of man. Neither the *reactivity* of life nor the *orientation* of the living being under the objective conditions of its existence, nor *irritability*, nor *sensitivity*, nor any other qualities and properties inherent in living beings are of interest to him. He is interested in one question alone: how did all this at one time become possible, both as distinct phenomena and in the context of life as a planetary reality? I repeat again:

this is the first and only possible question for a theoretician.

His solution—at first a hypothetical one, as it were feeling out the limits of his formulation of the question, posits some kind of prelife reality of massive “ejection” in the soup of the world ocean of a complex chemical substance capable of internal “reflexion” of its polar centers. It does not yet have the surface membrane characteristic of the first forms of life. But the inner interreflexivity of its “centers” already makes possible *independent motion* along the gradients of the streams of the “environment.” In this hypothesis it is important to note that the “environment” does not confront the new chemical formation as something that calls forth its activeness *from without*. The “environment” is the *inner* basis of such activeness, for the formation itself presupposes, by the laws of chemical transformations, its self-reproduction. The role of the “environment” is that of a “nutritive” support for internal acts of self-reproduction. An eloquent and cogent example with the very simple form of a sponge! Its external “cilia” assist its motion in the environment (in the old terminology—activity of the organism with an object, “object-related activity”). But when it is “turned inside out” they are transformed into a means of subjectively reflexive self-definition of life.

Here we have a logic of self-development of life and not a reaction to external stimuli. It is not for nothing that today no one so thoroughly and so thoughtfully knows all (I emphasize—all!) the works of Vygotsky. And I could demonstrate to my few readers the strikingly profound philosophical literacy of the author. But this no longer has any bearing upon the myth of cultural-historical psychology.

But even given such a divergence between the theoretical basis of the Elkonin-Davydov conception and school practice, things are not so terribly tragic. First, the principals and teachers of a number of schools under Elkonin’s direct guidance, so he asserts, are seriously drawn toward the theory and try to bring the content of all lessons into correspondence with it. Perhaps without great success, but the attempt is important in itself. Second, there are

also “violations” of the quite strict canons of this theory that create something fundamentally new but exceptionally productive—and not only for Elkonin-Davydov schools. Above all, I have in mind the literature textbooks with a full “basket” of all the materials needed by teacher and students that have now been prepared not only for primary school but also for higher grades. They were created by Galina Nikolaevna Kudina and the poetess Zinaida Nikolaevna Novlianskaia, pupils of Davydov who were awarded the state prize for these textbooks. These are fantastic textbooks! My granddaughter, who is not yet six years old, reads the second-grade textbook that they gave her like a poem by Pushkin. It contains almost everything that is familiar to her from children’s booklets, starting with L.N. Tolstoy and ending with contemporary children’s storytellers and poets. There are none of the idiotic questions following each verse or fable that without fail kill the ability to appreciate poetry.<sup>13</sup> Nor do they contain pseudoscientific definitions of metaphor, poetic styles, and so on. Their textbooks radiate the energy of linguistic creativity: fables, verses, and stories familiar since early childhood unobtrusively and covertly allow children to learn for themselves what a metaphor is and what kinds of styles are used in prose and poetry, including the Bible’s Song of Songs, the suras of the Koran, and religious Buddhist poetics—not to mention the classics of Russian and foreign literature. So the corresponding commission of the Ministry of Education is not giving these textbooks its seal of approval for the publication of new textbooks by Kudina and Novlianskaia!

Instead of them, something definitively perverse and dangerous is being “pressed” skillfully through the sieve of ministry permits. During the reign of the militant atheism of pseudocommunist ideology, any reference to the Psalms or to any of the other religious values of culture was removed from the fairy tales of Andersen, Russian fables, and L.N. Tolstoy’s children’s stories. The new creators of educational curricula, textbooks, and reading books, self-assured and irresponsible, have suddenly decided that fables and legends, stories and verses contain many tragic elements that, in

their opinion, have a bad effect on the way the child views the world. Now everything will be different. The wolf will accompany Little Red Riding Hood to grandmother, where they will drink tea with dumplings. Muzgarka and the Rooster in *The Winter Hut on Studenaia Hill* [Zimov'e na Studenoi] will, of course, stay alive and rescue the hero. Rusalka will marry her prince, while in Gaidar's *Military Secret* [Voennaia taina] the hero will not die from the stone thrown by the enemy but will heroically swaddle the enemy and take him to the border guards.

Idiocy! There is no other word for it! And there I was, dumb kid, before starting school and at primary school, sobbing inconsolably as I experienced as my own the tragic fate of the heroes of these works. But what a starry-eyed blockhead I would have grown into if the grownup world had not also revealed to me its tragic aspect! It is all these pretentious novelties from the subjects of the imperious bureaucratic leadership of education, who are throwing out the Elkonin-Davydov legacy onto the trash heap of history, that I consider, alongside all the discrepancies (to put it mildly) between the theory of the cultural-historical determination of the formation of human subjectivity and the canons of formal education, to be the true tragedy of V.V. Davydov.

It is not by chance that one of the pupils of the new teachers recently declared that he was ready to “smash” the theory of Vygotsky and all the Vygotskians by demonstrating their Marxist narrow-mindedness and complete barrenness. So then, let us await this surprise too, inspired by the apostasy of the teachers of such a bellicose young man.

### **On axioms**

And thus, I shall start with the search for the true axiom of the science of man. Taking into account the fact that the subjective-motivation of each future step in the development of human life activity properly speaking returns us to Emmanuel Kant's third antinomy of pure reason.<sup>14</sup>

On the one hand (thesis), those who incorporate the life of man into cause-and-effect relations with the external world are right. But on the other hand (antithesis), man lives by his future, motivating his every life action by an image of his goal. Therefore, unlike all other living beings on the planet, man creates himself willfully and purposively!

Such is the third antinomy of pure reason.

And now to the main thing! Vygotsky stood on this same platform. And it was precisely from this position that the masters of the new psychological technologies and seekers after a new basis (a new axiom) of psychology as a closed-in-upon-itself science, equipped only with professional “spectacles,” distanced themselves. L.S. Vygotsky—this bard, this Mozart of the higher theory that understands the processes of growth of individuality within the general intersubjective speech field—was a superb master of the logic of genesis of the self-development of life, a logic that has been discussed in a meticulous and contradictory fashion (that is a compliment) by logicians of theory par excellence from Thales to Marx. One is struck by his openness to all concepts of the science of man. If there is any fault of which he *cannot* be accused, it is that of being professionally closed in upon himself!

Wherein lies the enduring value of Vygotsky’s work? It lies precisely in his awareness of the identity of Kant’s thesis and antithesis! In Kant all antinomies are given and resolved in the following manner: the thesis contains the antithesis within itself and generates the antithesis for us. The antithesis is “pregnant” with the thesis and makes no sense without its explication. The dynamic identity of their apparently opposite senses is productive for the development of a new sense of the antinomies—the unity of opposites as the solution of the problem hidden in the antinomies. For indeed, it is precisely this identity of theirs that guides our every step on life’s path. Are we subordinated to objective circumstances when they are insuperable? No, a thousand times no! Without the attempt to change them man would not take a single step. His fate lies in the struggle for the purposive and willful

change of circumstances, and this ends up as self-change. Creativity: that is the essence of human life. Even the repudiation of creativity, adaptation to circumstances requires the energy, albeit dull, of the renunciation of struggle. Again the will of man himself! One may not respect the motives behind such renunciation, leaving them to the conscience of the weak of spirit and will. But, after all, even renunciation is a subjective motivation of conduct! Thus, our axiom of the general science of man, like any theoretical axiom, retains its a priori character, and, therefore, its clarity as something that does not require proof.

Hence, also what may be called the *genome of moral feeling*:

The unique capacity of man for purposively volitional actions addressed to the sympathy of other people in the hope of mutual understanding, for free co-being with them as the being of good, as *moral* being—there is the basis and supreme value of human history and culture! But, alas, man's free will is capable of leading also to the suppression of the free will of others and to the restriction of their freedom, right up to the deprivation of life itself (the being of evil). And none of us can resolve upon word or deed without presentiment of its most important result: the attitude that other people will take toward it. And that means—toward each of us as a personality, toward the motives and possible results of our word and deed. And the main thing in this attitude of theirs is not their assessment of their utilitarian need of us, of the usefulness for themselves of our words and deeds. The main thing is their correlation of our words and deeds with the "space" of their own freedom—their freedom of thought, freedom of feelings, freedom of actions, a correlation that is not always actually conscious but that unambiguously motivates their reaction to our words and deeds. The sense-bearing presentiment of this *moral* reaction compels us each time to transfigure anew our every address to other people in the *moral* field of communication, thereby reproducing this field as an intersubjective reality.

In other words, any action of ours, deliberate or impulsive, is inevitably verified by us and in us for the degree of its freedom—or,

if you like, for the spirit of freedom, a single intra- and intersubjective affect of humane co-being. It is verified for *humaneness* as primordially and objectively the chief condition (and precondition!)—albeit an unspoken one, not engraved in rules and maxims—for the establishment of a human kind of life. It is verified not in court, not on the public square, not at meetings, but inside ourselves. For each “I” is a bearer and subject of this spirit, the subject of its own will to freedom.

Limitation of the always anticipated verification for humaneness is its source and the possibility of volitional effort. The organism does not garner its strength for action (or inaction) by itself; senses of the communicative situation that it does not itself experience dictate to it, as their inevitable consequences, the impulse of affective-semantic effort. Whether a deed (action, word, text, music, picture, etc.) is to be or not to be depends, above all, on the extent to which the person himself is carried away by his need to address himself *urbi et orbi*—to the city and the world, to other people, to eternity, to himself. On this in large measure also depends whether the person will have sufficient strength to overcome himself. And due to his anticipation not only of direct or indirect resistance from others, but also of their possible inattention and lack of understanding. And also of the resistance of the material to be used and, consequently, of the always viscous stream of the deed or action itself, which constantly threatens to become entangled in its own “steps.” The strength to overcome oneself and circumstances, the strength of their creative remolding—that is the strength of free will. For this very strength manifests itself as none other than the effort purposively to transform reality and, first of all, oneself as a real subject—one who is master of his own body and in some measure also of the objective conditions of his life.

Thus, it turns out that the intellect, the higher emotions, the moral imperative (Kant’s “moral law within us”), the will, and intuition all really realize *a single capacity*—the capacity not to accept everything as it is, but to transform what is by synthesizing new images into new realities of being. This capacity and its power within the isolated “world” of universal symbols of the triumph of

life and spirit constitute the *higher emotions*. Within the isolated “world” of discourse they constitute the *intellect*. Within the subjective “world” of the “I” proper they constitute the *will*. And within all the worlds of human life activity, which is always addressed to all and, therefore, also to each (including to oneself) they constitute *morality*.

It is possible that the absolute reciprocal counterposition of these “worlds” is a historically transient phenomenon. It is not by chance that the plastic tissue of esthetic experience, temporarily lost within the material of semiotic discourse, nonetheless constantly breaks through in the revelations of simple and beautiful formulations of that experience. Nor is it by chance that the “rationalists” themselves regard as the truth of creativity in science not calculation but intuition and sudden insight, training for which, in their opinion, can be provided only by art. No less symptomatic and no less inspiring to litterateurs, artists, sculptors, and musicians is the emotional reinterpretation of “dry and rational” scientific discoveries, be they Newton’s model of the universe or Einstein’s absolute relativism, Plato’s “ideas” and “good” or the unconscious of Sigmund Freud.

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The first readers of this manuscript have already managed to tell me that my claim to definition of the axiom of the general science of man looks like an impudent usurpation of truth. Will all those theoreticians who proceed in their theories from different bases take offense? In what way are they any worse than me?!

It seems to me that this objection arises from a failure to understand the nature of the axiom of a theory. An axiom is a priori by definition: it needs no proof, for it is clear as it stands, affirming itself as the unconditional basis of a theory, as the measure of all future transformations of the object of the theory. And, after all, the theory merely outlines its object field: geometry throughout the ages will be concerned with the senses of *measures* of the extension of being, mechanics with the reciprocal dependence of the

senses of categorial *measures* of the time, distance, velocity, and inertia of the motion of masses, and astronomy with the semantic measures of all the realities of the universe. And any comprehension of human existence is possible only within the domain of the sense outlined by Kant's third antinomy of pure reason.

But even before Kant, everything that is thinkable by people was maturing within the same domain in the rituals of primitive kinship communes. Witness to this is borne by their investment by the volitional and purposive moving force of their existence with all the phenomena of nature. In the myths of the first peoples of the earth, as later in the world religions, one finds the same contradiction of human existence—that between the dependence of the will and goals of people's lives on supernatural and natural circumstances and the freedom of choice, the purposive and willful character of the subjective motivation of their heroes' conduct, appraised through the support or retribution of their gods. The object field of all theories of the science of man—in history, physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, and so on—is outlined by the domain of this contradiction.

This cannot be concocted, because theory as such is none other than the resolution of contradictions within the measure-related senses of *thinkable being*. It tests itself by means of experiment and the technical practice of applying theoretical ideas, but even in the course of this process it remains pure theory. Its initial axiom is not exposed to doubt, inasmuch as that axiom is not derived from professional applications but posits itself as something that exists in theoretical thinking prior to and without the latter.

The very first axiom of Euclid proclaims the point and its motion to form a line. The point cannot be divided in two, and if an infinite number of points are removed from the line formed by the point's motion then an infinite number of points will remain on the line. All geometric transformations are based on this axiom. This confirms its absolutely a priori character. I repeat: the object of any theory is given by its axiom, which outlines the field of sense-bearing measures of the thinkable reality of being that

correspond thereto. The development of the object of a theory does not go beyond the bounds of its axiom. However, the axiom, for all its a priori clarity, inescapably contains within itself a contradiction—its affirmation and its own negation: the point cannot be divided in two but, after all, we presuppose this operation in thought. The dynamic, actively pulsing identity of “cannot” and “can” sublates the tension of this contradiction (German *aufheben*—remove while retaining). In this way a new—more correctly, a transformed—axiom is born. The history of the development of the theory is rearranged upon a new basis while retaining within itself the original, fundamental axiom in transformed form.

It is important to recall also that Vygotsky himself, analyzing the causes of the historical crisis of psychology, saw the chief cause in the fact that psychologists rush from “nature” to “culture” and back again. Thereby they try to find the roots of the spirituality of man’s life either in his body and in his reactions to stimuli from the “environment” or in the historical forms of cultural discourse. They are unable to grasp the contradictory identity of these “opposites” that is clearly outlined by Kant’s third antinomy. For them Kant is not an authority—he is a philosopher, not a psychologist. However, Kant’s axiom—*the identity of corporeality and subjectivity*, taking us back to Spinoza, to his single substance of being—is the axiom of the general science of man, which lies, I repeat, at the basis of physiology, psychology, history, literary studies, and all other theoretical disciplines that have as their object the life and activity of man.

Thus, the a priori postulating basis of any theory serves also as its object. It is the measure of all senses of the theory that do not exist as things. Theory deals exclusively with measures of senses that are born out of their always existing inner contradictions and tries to resolve those contradictions. Theoretical work radically transforms the primary, initial conditions of the original positing of senses, seeking the utmost clarity of those contradictions the resolution of which defines its goals. The practical utilization of these goals is not its affair. The demand for their practical realization is

brought to light through the selfish interests of various socially organized groups (classes, strata, state and public organizations, etc.) that live at the expense of others. Ideology industriously justifies, as it has always done, the self-interest of their dependence on theory. The task of theory is to throw out ideology onto the trash heap of history.

### **What I least expected**

It turns out that I have demonstrated, little by little, that there is a cultural-historical theory in psychology, that it is alive, and, consequently, that it has its methodological bases and problems. This means that I am obliged to fulfill the order for an article devoted to this theme. How on earth could it have seemed to me that the theoretical concept of cultural-historical psychology was a myth?! Have the works of Vygotsky really been plundered and extinguished? And what about Plato, Plotin, Francis Bacon, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx? And Ilyenkov? And our good friend Michael Cole, who anxiously hoes the same field? And Jim Wertsch, no less devoted to cultural-historical psychology? And the many others who strive in one fashion or another to express themselves in the concept of the cultural-historical logic of the general science of man and of psychology? And once there is such a theory, there is also the logic of its self-definition.

First of all, there is its axiom, without which there is not, and cannot be, any psychological theory. And it sounds like this: *All man's life-supporting bodily procedures are motivated by their volitional goal-setting, while at the same time they remain precisely bodily, involved in the exchange of substances, and dependent on colds and harmful habits.* There is also its main question: *How is the subjective motivation of all the vital processes of Homo sapiens possible?* Then follows the logic of the reply to this question, which excludes the Cartesian, behaviorist (stimulus–reaction) paradigm: it is necessary to find at least a hypothetical basis of life—of self-willful, constantly self-reproducing being. And for theory, for the time being, it is not important that the definition of

its basis is hypothetical: theory seeks a sense (*measure*) of the thinkability of that basis that will justify the entire history of life on our planet. And this, for the time being, is more than sufficient.

Consequently, for a fundamental psychological theory—a theory of the emergence of the *special characteristics* of the subjective intention of the being of *Homo sapiens*—it is necessary to determine the source and basis of *life* as a planetary reality. Indeed, this has always been done in all psychological theories worth mentioning! At least recall Leontiev. He starts with the reactivity of the simplest organisms (the amoeba, etc.) and tropisms (the sunflower that follows with its head the position of the sun in the sky), continues up the evolutionary ladder with the increasingly complex bodily means and modes of the subjective motivation of animal behavior, and finally reaches the reflexive ability of man through his *subjective and purposive will* to “correct” the genetic predeterminations of bodily life, creatively and purposively to reorder his own self-consciousness and create therein new “worlds” needed not only by the individual but also by humanity!

For the subjective motivation of the life activity of all the species and subspecies of the animal kingdom on the planet earth is none other than the objective self-definition of life as a *natural phenomenon*. *Subjectivity is the common field of all life*, which through the efforts of the subjective reflexion of all its species reproduces itself as a single whole. The development of this essence of *life* to the point at which species-specific (genetic) constraints can be overcome through the development of human culture—there is the mystery of its basis, demanding solution from psychology too! But, consequently, a fundamental psychological theory must be open to the sense-bearing measures of the object of various kinds of theories—biochemical, biological, physiological, and also historical, economic, social, and culturological.

But, above all, it must be open to the sense-bearing measures of the being–nonbeing of all that is real that have been investigated and created by philosophy. For it is precisely philosophy’s universal *sense-bearing measures* of the thinkability of *being* for the theoretical appraisal of the subjective motivation of the *being of the*

*living* that through their development define also the logic of development of psychological theory. This basis must be preserved in determining each step of the theoretical analysis of the intersubjective speech field within which man acquires his capacity for the subjective motivation of all his life actions. The “unit” of this capacity is not a special abstraction like the reciprocal transitions of real into ideal forms and vice versa, but the act of communication—the act of addressing others and addressing the self as an other within the self. Speech forms— affective-verbal, musical, graphic, and motive, as they generate needed goal-related senses of the means of our address to one another and to ourselves, are reinterpreted on each occasion, creatively transformed in accordance with the given goal, and this makes man a creator of linguistic forms, even of the simplest and only at first glance most stereotyped of such forms. And this is not philosophy substituting itself for the specifically psychological aspect of the investigation of the foundations of the soul, but precisely psychology substantiated in terms of fundamental theory.

Such are the logic and methodology of cultural-historical theory. On this I have written a great deal, and for the untwisting of the logic of cultural-historical psychological theory I refer you, respected readers, to my monograph *The Self-Definition of Culture* [Samoopredelenie kul'tury] (Moscow: INDRIK, 2003) and to my latest, only just published articles: “The Muteness of Thought” [Nemota mysli] (*Voprosy filosofii*, 2005, no. 2); “Farewell, Philosophy!” [Proshchai, filosofii!] (*Epistemologiya i filosofiya nauki*, 2005, no. 2); and also “Kant Versus Modern Psychology,” which is soon, I hope, coming out in *Voprosy filosofii*.

In conclusion, I shall steal from Luther the sacramental statement: “I have spoken and saved my soul.”

## Notes

1. In principle, I share the despair of Vasia Davydov, who not long before his demise told me literally the following: “Enough! Volodia Zinchenko has ceased

to be a psychologist, giving first preference to poetry and art. This is a symptom of the *historical crisis of psychology* of which Vygotsky wrote.” But Volodia remains true to the main idea of the old article in *Voprosy filosofii* that he published jointly with Merab Mamardashvili *at the dawn of his misty youth*. The article is precisely about the object of psychology. And then they declared that art reveals to us people’s souls more clearly and fully than psychology today. And I cannot help it—each year Zinchenko’s booklets come out, and I read them with pleasure. I love their author for the childlike directness of his experience of the psychological depths of art! And, in general, he is a fine fellow—a remarkable talent full of glory!

2. The teaching of the mysteries and mechanisms of psychology is also already broken up into specialized courses of training precisely for these specializations, to the direct detriment of the involvement of students in research within the field of the unsolved problems of fundamental psychological theory.

3. Speaking more broadly, Asiatic despotism has reigned in our country for over a thousand years. However, I am speaking of the past 300 years, during which Russia has been dominated by the power of the bureaucracy, which manipulates its tsars, general secretaries, and presidents.

4. I note in passing that the behavior in court of the defenders of the faith was reminiscent of the militant Catholic enthusiasm that inspired the knights in the Crusades rather than of our Russian Jesus Christ. The Jesus of Dostoevsky and of S.N. and M.A. Bulgakov is closer to us and more understandable in terms of our faith. Neither Prince Myshkin nor Ieshua in *The Master and Margarita* [Master i Margarita] are capable in principle of the heartrending shriek full of malicious hatred or of threats of physical reprisal against anyone.

5. His expression.

6. V.V. Bibikhin, *Iazyk filosofii* (Moscow: Progress, 1993), p. 16 (italics added). I add: not language, but precisely speech. Living, palpating speech—that is the “environment” of human existence!

7. By the way, the list of obligatory reading that Eval’d compiled for participants in the seminar was not only extensive but professionally difficult: it included all three volumes of Hegel’s great *Logic*, Kant’s *Critiques*, and works by Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Husserl, and Wittgenstein. And I no longer remember the whole list.

8. B.D. Elkonin [El’konin], *Vvedenie v psikhologiiu razvitiia (V traditsii kul’turno-istoricheskoi teorii L.S. Vygotskogo)* (Moscow: Trivola, 1994), pp. 165–67.

9. Elkonin, *Vvedenie*, p. 165. Further on I continue to cite Elkonin’s text precisely.

10. Incidentally, it was precisely Plato who began and triumphantly completed the analysis of the idea (of the ideal) as a model reality. Nothing needs either to be either added to or taken away from his analysis.

11. True, Stoletov soon took me off the editorial board. It happened this way. President of the GDR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences Gerhard Neuner, secretly from Stoletov, gave the text of my chapter to the Central Committee of the

Socialist Unity Party of Germany, whence it reached, with a corresponding report, the Central Committee of the CPSU. There, naturally, it aroused indignation and Stoletov got a scolding. After this our president cut off all relations with Neuner, who was, by the way, a personal friend of Margot Honecker, the minister of education of the GDR. The textbook came out with the chapter by D.B. but, of course, without my chapter. I am unspeakably glad of it: the textbook was exceptionally bad.

12. My colleagues and I put forward and substantiated the idea and image of the cultural-educational center at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. It was supported by the vice president of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences—Viktor Gennad'evich Zubov, a well-known physicist and pedagogue. Hearing that such a center was being created near Tselinograd [in Kazakhstan], he exclaimed: I'm chucking everything—Moscow, the academy, Moscow State University—and coming to join you! Only tell me what kinds of skills are needed by the state farm where you are setting up your Center. I brought him all our plans. But soon after, he died following an uninterrupted series of heart attacks. But what a man he was! A sparkling wit, boldness to the point of desperation. He was the one person in the old academy with whom I fell sincerely and forever in love.

13. An example: a standard textbook, issued and reissued for more than one decade with the ministry imprimatur, sets this question following Pushkin's poem *Autumn* [Osen']: "What do collective farmers do at this time of year?"

14. See I. Kant, *Soch. v 6 tomakh* (Moscow: Mysl', 1964), vol. 3, pp. 414–17.