

CHAPTER 4

Activity and Consciousness

4.1. The Genesis of Consciousness

The activity of the subject, external and internal, is mediated and regulated by a psychic reflection of reality. What the subject sees in the object world are motives and goals, and conditions of his activity must be received by him in one way or another, presented, understood, retained, and reproduced in his memory; this applies also to processes of his activity and to the subject himself – to his condition, characteristics, and **idiosyncracies**. Thus the analysis of activity leads us to the traditional themes of psychology. Now, however, the logic of the investigation is turned around: The problem of the appearance of psychic processes is turned into the problem of their origin, their elicitation by those social connections into which man enters in the object world.

The psychic reality that is revealed to us directly is the subjective world of consciousness. A century was required for us to free ourselves of the identification of the psychic with the conscious. What was surprising was the variety of paths in philosophy, psychology, and physiology that led to the distinction being made between the conscious and the psychic: It is sufficient to name Leibnitz, Fechner, Freud, Sechenov, and Pavlov.

The decisive step was a confirmation of the idea of various levels of psychic reflection. From the historical, genetic point of view this indicated an admission of the existence of a preconscious psyche of animals and the appearance in man of its qualitatively new form – consciousness. Thus new questions arose: about that objective indispensability that is served by emerging consciousness, about that which gives rise to it, and about its internal structure.

Consciousness in its directness is a picture of the world, opening up before the subject, in which he himself, his actions, and his conditions are

included. Before the unsophisticated man, of course, this subjective picture does not present any kind of theoretical problem; before him is the world, and not the world and a picture of the world. In this elemental realism is incorporated a real, although a naive, truth. Identifying psychic reflection and consciousness is another matter; it is nothing more than an illusion of our introspection.

It follows from the seemingly unlimited broadness of consciousness. If we ask ourselves whether we are conscious of one or another phenomenon we are posing a problem of perception, and of course we resolve it practically instantly. It may be necessary to devise a tachistoscopic methodology in order to divide "the field of perception" from "the field of consciousness" experimentally.

On the other hand, the facts that indicate that man is capable of realizing complex adaptive processes to accommodate pieces of furniture, hardly taking their image into consideration, are well known and easily tested under laboratory conditions; he circumvents obstacles and even manipulates things as if he did not "see" them.

It is another matter if it is necessary to make or change something according to a model or to portray a certain objective content. When I bend out of wire or draw, let us say, a pentagon, then I necessarily compare the representation I have with objective conditions, with stages of its being realized in the product, and internally measure one against the other. Such a comparison requires that my representation should appear for me as if it were on the same plane with the objective world but not, however, merging with it. This is particularly clear in problems whose solution requires a preliminary visualization "in the mind" of the mutual spatial relations that the images of the objects have one to the other; such a problem, for example, might require a mental turning of a figure drawn into another figure.

Historically, the necessity of such a "prospect" (presentability) of a psychic image to the subject occurs only in a transition from adaptive activity of animals to productive work activity specific to man. The product toward which activity is directed does not yet exist. For this reason it can direct activity only if it is presented to the subject in a form that allows it to be compared with the original material (the object of work) and its intermediate transformations. Moreover, the psychic image of the product as a goal must exist for the subject in order that he might work with this image, i.e., modify it in relation to present conditions. Such images are in essence conscious images, conscious representations – in a word, the essence of the phenomena of consciousness.

In itself, the inevitability of the development in man of the phenomena of consciousness, it is understood, still says nothing about the processes of their generation. This inevitability, however, clearly poses the problem of investigating this process, a problem that simply did not appear in early

psychology. The fact is that within the framework of the traditional dyadic scheme *object* → *subject*, the phenomenon of consciousness in the subject was accepted with no explanations, if one does not consider the interpretations that assume the existence under the roof of our skull of some kind of observer contemplating pictures that neurophysiological processes weave in our brains.

The method of scientific analysis of the origin and function of human consciousness, both social and individual, was discovered, in the first place, by Marx. As a result, as a modern author emphasized, the subject of investigation of consciousness shifted from the subjective individual to social systems of activity in such a way that "the method of internal observation and understanding introspection which for a long time had monopolized the investigation of consciousness began to creak at the seams."¹ In a few pages it is impossible, of course, to treat to any great extent even the principal questions of the Marxist theory of consciousness. Not pretending to do this, I will limit myself only to certain positions that indicate the way to resolving the problem of activity and consciousness in psychology.

It is evident that an explanation of the nature of consciousness lies in the same features of human activity as those that make consciousness inevitable: in its objective--subjective productive character.

Work activity imprints itself on its product. There takes place, in the words of Marx, a transition of activity into a fulfilling quality. This transition represents a process of material embodiment of the objective content of activity that now presents itself to the subject, that is, stands before him in the form of an image of the perceived object.

In other words, in the very first approach the origin of consciousness appears thus: A representation directing activity embodied in an object gets its secondary "objectivized" existence, which is accessible to sensory perception; as a result it is as if the subject sees his own representation in the external world; having been duplicated, it is perceived. This scheme, however, is untenable. It takes us back to the former subjective-empirical and, in essence, idealistic point of view that precisely singles out, first of all, the condition that the indicated transition has consciousness as its indispensable prerequisite – the presence in the subject of representations, intentions, ideational plans, schemes, or "models," that these psychic phenomena are objectivized in activity and in its products. As far as the activity of the subject himself is concerned, activity directed by consciousness carries out, in relation to the content of consciousness, only a transmissive function and a function of "confirmation-nonconfirmation."

¹M.K.Mamardashvili, "The analysis of consciousness in the works of Marx," *Questions of Philosophy*, No. 6, 1968, p. 14.

The main thing, however, is not that the active directing role of consciousness should be indicated. The main problem is to understand consciousness as a subjective product, as a transformed form of a manifestation of those relations, social in their nature, that are realized by the activity of man in an object world.

Activity is not by any means simply an expresser and transmitter of the psychic image objectivized in its product. It is not an image that is impressed on the product, but specifically activity, the objective content that it carries objectively in itself. Transitions subject → *activity* → *object* form a kind of circular movement, and for that reason it may seem to make no difference which of its links or moments is taken as the initial one. However, this is not in any way a movement in a magic circle. This circle can be broken and is broken precisely in sensory-practical activity itself.

Appearing in direct contiguity with objective reality and subordinate to it, activity is modified and enriched, and in that enrichment it is crystallized in a product. The realized activity is richer and truer than the consciousness that precedes it. Thus, for the consciousness of the subject, contributions that are introduced by his activity remain cryptic; from this it follows that consciousness may seem a basis of activity.

Let us express this another way. The reflection of products of objective activity that realizes connections and relations of social individuals appears to them as phenomena of their consciousness. In reality, however, behind these phenomena lie the mentioned objective connections and relations, although not in their open form, but hidden from the subject. At the same time the phenomena of consciousness constitute a real moment in the movement of activity. This is their significance, not their “*epiphenomenology*.” As V. P. Kuz'min rightly noted, the conscious image appears as an ideal standard, which is materialized in *activity*.²

The approach to consciousness of which we are speaking radically changes the statement of the problem that is of greatest significance for physiology — the problem of the relation between the subjective image and the external object. It destroys that mystification of the problem that the postulate of directness, which I have mentioned many times, creates in psychology. If we are to proceed from the assumption that external activities directly evoke in us — in our brains — a subjective image, then the question arises as to how it happens that this image appears as if existing outside us, outside our subjectivity — in the coordinates of the external world.

Within the framework of the postulate of directness it is possible to answer this question only by accepting the process of, so to speak, secondary projection of the psychic image outside. The theoretical unsoundness of

² See *The History of Marxist Dialectics, Moscow, 1971*, pp. 181-184

such an assumption is *obvious*³; it is in clear opposition to the facts that indicate that the psychic image even from the very beginning “is related” to a reality that is external with respect to the brain of the subject and is not projected into the external world but more likely is extracted from it.⁴ Of course, when I speak of “extracting,” this is only a metaphor. It expresses, however, a real process accessible to scientific investigation — a process of assimilation by the subject of the object world in its ideal form, in the form of conscious reflection.

This process initially appears in that system of objective relations in which a transition of the objective content of activity into its product takes place. In order that this process might be realized, however, it is not sufficient for the product of activity, having absorbed activity into itself, to appear before the subject with its material properties; it must be transformed in such a way as to appear recognizable to the subject, that is, ideally. This transformation takes place through the functioning of language, which is a product and means of communication among the participators in production. Language carries in its meanings (concepts) one or another objective content, but a content fully liberated from its materiality. Thus food, of course, appears as a material object; the meaning of the word food, however, does not contain in itself even a gram of nutritional substance. Here even language itself has its material existence, its *material*; but language, taken in relationship to the signified reality, is only a form of its being, just as are those material brain processes of individuals that realize its *perception*.⁵

Thus individual consciousness as a specifically human form of subjective reflection of objective reality may be understood only as a product of those relations and mediations that arise in the course of the establishment and development of society. Outside the systems of these relationships (and outside social consciousness) the existence of the individual psyche and the form of conscious reflection, conscious images, is not possible.

A clear understanding of this is all the more important for psychology since up to this time psychology has not conclusively given up explaining the phenomena of consciousness from the standpoint of naive *anthropologism*. Even the activity approach to the psychological study of the phenomena of consciousness permits an understanding of it only under the indispensable condition that human activity itself be considered as a process included in the system of relationships that realize its social being, which is its method of existence also as a natural and physical essence.

³ S. L. Rubinshtein, *Life and Consciousness*, Moscow, 1957, p. 34; V. A. Lektorski, *The Problem of Subject and Object in Classical and Modern Bourgeois Philosophy, Moscow, 1965*; A. V. Brushlinskii, “Certain methods of modeling in psychology,” in: *Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Psychology, Moscow, 1969*, pp. 148-254.

⁴ A. N. Leont'ev, “Image and model,” *Problems of Psychology, No. 2, 1970*.

⁵ E. V. Il'enkov, “The ideal,” *Philosophical Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1962*.

--- Of course, the indicated conditions and relationships, which give rise to human consciousness, characterize only its earliest stages. Subsequently, in connections with the development of material production and social contact, a distinguishing of and then an isolation of spiritual production and the resulting technization of language, people's consciousness is freed from the direct connection with their direct practical work activity. The circle of awareness becomes ever wider so that consciousness in man becomes a **universal**, although not the only form of psychic reflection. In the process it **undergoes** a series of radical changes.

At first, consciousness exists only in the form of the psychic image, which discloses for the subject the world surrounding him, but activity remains, as formerly, practical, external. At a much later stage activity also becomes a subject of consciousness: Actions of other people are perceived and through them also the actions of the subject himself. Now they are communicated, signified by means of gestures or oral speech. This is a **pre-requisite** for the genesis of internal actions and operations that take place in the mind, on the "plane of consciousness." The consciousness-image becomes also consciousness-activity. It is in just this fullness that consciousness begins to appear to be emancipated from external sensory-practical **activity** and, more than that, seems to direct it.

Another major change that consciousness undergoes in the course of historical development is a breaking up of the initial merging of the consciousness of the work collective and the consciousness of the individuals forming it. This takes place because a wide circle of phenomena is perceived that includes in itself phenomena belonging to the sphere of such relations of individuals as compose the **personal** in the life of every one of them. Under these circumstances class stratification of society leads to people finding themselves in disparate, opposing relations, opposing one another with respect to means of production and the common product; their consciousness brings upon itself also a corresponding effect of this disparity, this opposition. In addition, ideological representations of their real life relationships are worked out by concrete individuals and included in the process of consciousness.

The result is a more complex picture of internal connections, **intertwinings**, and interconnections generated by the development of internal contradictions, which in their abstract aspect appear even in the analysis of the simplest relationships that characterize the system of human activity. At **first** glance immersing investigation in this more complex picture may seem to be a diversion from the problems of the concrete-psychological study of consciousness to a substitution of sociology for psychology. But this is just not so. On the contrary, psychological characteristics of individual consciousness can only be understood through their connections with those social relationships into which the individual is drawn.

4. 2. The Sensory Fabric of Consciousness

The development of the consciousness of individuals is characterized by psychological multiplicity.

In the phenomena of consciousness we discover first of all its sensory fabric. This fabric forms the sensory composition of concrete images of reality actually perceived or arising in memory, relating to the future, or even just imagined. These images differ according to their modality, sensory tone, degree of clarity, greater or lesser stability, etc. Many thousands of pages have been written about this. Empirical psychology, however, consistently avoided the most important question from the standpoint of the problem of consciousness: the question of that special function that sensory elements serve in consciousness. More precisely, this question was broached indirectly in problems such as the problem of sensibility of perception or the problem of the role of speech (language) in communication of sensory data.

The special function of sensory images of consciousness is that they impart reality to the conscious picture of the world that opens up before the subject. In other words, owing especially to the sensory content of consciousness, the world appears to the subject as existing not in consciousness but outside his consciousness — as an objective "field" and the object of his activity.

This conviction may appear paradoxical because investigation of sensory phenomena has for a long time stemmed from positions that lead in the opposite direction, to the idea of their "pure subjectivity," their "**hieroglyphicity**." Correspondingly, the sensory content of the images was presented not as realizing a direct connection of consciousness with the external **world**⁶ but rather as partitioning it off.

In the post-Helmholtz period experimental study of the process of perception was marked by great successes so that psychology of perception is now flooded with a great multitude of various facts and private hypotheses. What is surprising is this that, notwithstanding these successes, the theoretical position of Helmholtz remained unshakable.

It is true that in the majority of psychological works its presence is invisible, in the wings, unless you use it seriously and openly, as does, for example, R. Gregory, the author of some most persuasive contemporary books about visual perception.⁷

The strength of the position of Helmholtz is that in studying the physiology of vision he understood the impossibility of deriving images of objects directly from sensations, of identifying them with those "patterns" that light rays draw on the retina of the eye. Within the framework of the idea-

⁶ V. I. Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 46.

⁷R. Gregory, *The Thinking Eye*, Moscow, 1912.

tional system of the natural science of that time, the resolution of the problem suggested by Helmholtz (specifically, that to the work of the sensory organs the work of the brain is necessarily joined and this forms a hypothesis about objective reality on the basis of sensory hints) was the only one possible.

The fact is that objective images of consciousness were thought of as some kind of psychic things depending on other things making up their external cause. In other words, the analysis went along a plane of double extraction, which was expressed, on the one hand, in the withdrawal of sensory processes from the system of activity of the subject and, on the other, in the withdrawal of sensory images from the system of human consciousness. The idea itself of **systemics** of the object of scientific cognition remained unexploited.

Distinct from the approach that considered phenomena in their isolation, systemic analysis of consciousness requires investigation of the “former-s” of consciousness in their internal relationships elicited by the development of forms of connection between the subject and reality; this means investigation first of all from the aspect of that function that every “former” fulfills in the processes of presenting (representation) to the subject a picture of the world.

Sensory contents taken in the system of consciousness do not directly disclose their function; subjectively it is expressed only indirectly – in an instinctive experiencing of a “feeling of reality.” It reveals itself, however, whenever a disturbance or distortion of reception of external effects takes place. Because the facts that bear this out have an important significance for psychology, I will cite some of them.

We found a very clear manifestation of the function of sensory images in the consciousness of the real world in investigations of the reestablishment of objective actions in wounded miners who were completely blinded and had simultaneously lost both hands. Because they underwent a rehabilitating surgical operation that included massive displacement of the soft tissue of the forearms, they also lost tactile ability to perceive objects with their hands (the phenomena of dyssymbolia). It developed that since visual control was impossible this function could not be reestablished for them; correspondingly, objective hand movement could not be established either. As a result, several months after the accident, the patients had unusual complaints: Regardless of the fact that oral communication with those around them was not inhibited in any way and their intellectual processes were not damaged, the external, objective world gradually became “disappearing” for them. Although verbal ideas (the meaning of words) retained their logical connections for them, they gradually lost their objective attributions. Indeed, there developed a tragic picture of damage to the patients’ feeling of reality. “It was as if I were reading about everything and not seeing it ... everything seemed farther away from me,” thus one of the blind amputees described

his condition. He complained that when people greeted him, it was “as if there wasn’t any man **there**.”⁸

A similar phenomenon of loss of the feeling of reality was found also in normal subjects under conditions of artificial inversion of visual impressions. As early as at the end of the last century, Stratton in **his** classical experiments with special eyeglasses that inverted the image on the retina remarked that under these conditions there is a feeling of unreality of the perceived **world**.⁹

It was necessary to understand the essence of these qualitative reconstructions of the visual image, which appeared to the subject as experiencing an unreality of the visual picture. Later there were disclosed such peculiarities of inverted vision as difficulty in identifying familiar **objects**,¹⁰ particularly human faces,” visual aconstancy,” etc.

The absence of directly relating the inverted visual image to the objective object world is evidence that at the level of reflecting consciousness, the subject is able to differentiate between perceptions of the real world and his internal phenomenal field. The first was presented by perceptible “signifying” images, the second by the actual sensual material. In other words, the sensual material of the image may be represented in consciousness in two ways: either as something that has an objective content for the subject (and this is the usual, “normal” phenomenon) or as itself. As distinct from normal cases when the sensual material and the objective content merge, their nonconformity is disclosed either as a result of specially directed introspection” or under special experimental conditions – particularly noticeably in experiments with a long adaptation to inverted vision.¹⁴ Immediately after putting on inverting prisms, the subject sees only the sensual material of the visual image with no objective content. The fact is that in perceiving the world through optical fittings that change the projection, the apparent images are transformed in the direction of their greatest plausibility; in other words, in adapting to optical distortion what takes place is not simply a different “decoding” of the projected image but a complex process of structuring the perceived objective content, which has a determined **objec-**

⁸A. N. Leont’ev and A. V. Zaporozhets, *Reestablishment of Movement*, Moscow, 1945, p. 75.

⁹M. Stratton, “Some preliminary experiments in vision without inversion of the retinal image,” *Psychological Review*, No. 4, 1897.

¹⁰M. Gaffron, “Perceptualexperience: An analysis of its relation to the external world through internal processings,” *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, Vol. 5, 1963.

¹¹Jin, “Looking on an upsidedown face,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 81(1), 1969.

¹²A. D. Logvinenko and V. V. Stolín, “Perception under conditions of inversion of the visual field,” *Ergonomics. Proceedings of the AU-Union Scientific-Research Institute of Technical Aesthetics*, No. 6, Moscow, 1973.

¹³“This gave a basis for introduction of the concept, “visual field,” a concept distinct from the concept, “visual world.” – J. J. Gibson, *Perception of the Visual World*, Boston, 1950.

¹⁴A. D. Logvinenko, “Inverted vision and the visual image,” *Problems of Psychology*, No. 5, 1974.

tive logic different from the “projected logic” of the retinal image. For this reason the impossibility of perceiving the objective content at the beginning of a long-term experiment with inversions is linked to the fact that in the consciousness of the subject the image is presented only in its sensual material. Later, perceptive adaptation takes place as a unique process of reestablishing the objective content of the visual image in its inverted sensual material.¹⁵

The possibility of differentiating between the phenomenal field and objective, “meaningful” images evidently is a property only of human consciousness; owing to it, man is liberated from the slavery of sensory impressions when they are distorted by incidental conditions of perception. In this connection experiments with monkeys fitted with glasses inverting the retinal image are interesting; it developed that as distinct from man, in the monkeys this completely disrupted their behavior, and they entered a long period of inactivity.¹⁶

I could append considerable data here pertaining to the particular contribution that sensitivity adds to individual consciousness; some important facts obtained under conditions of lengthy sensory deprivation, for instance, were completely omitted.” But what has been said is a sufficient basis for posing the question that is central to further analysis of the problem we are considering.

The deep nature of the psychic sensory images lies in their objectivity, in that they have their origin in processes of activity connecting the subject in a practical way with the external objective world. Regardless of how complicated these connections and the forms of activity that realize them are, sensual images retain their original objective relation.

Of course, when we compare the vast richness of the cognitive results of human mental activity with those contributions that our sensitivity introduces directly into it, then these contributions are almost insignificant and their extreme limitations are most obvious; to this is added the fact that sensory impressions constantly contradict the more complete meaning. From this comes the idea that sensory impressions serve only as a stimulus bringing into action our cognitive capabilities, and that images of objects are engendered by internal mental operations — conscious or unconscious — that, in other words, we would not perceive the object world if we did not think it. But how could we think this world if it did not initially disclose itself to us specifically, in its objectivity, sensually perceived?

¹⁵A. D. Logvinenko, “Perceptive activity during inversion of the retinal image,” in: *Perception and Activity, Moscow, 1975*.

¹⁶J. B. Foley, “An experimental investigation of the visual field in the Rhesus monkey,” *Journal of Genetic Psychology, No. 56*, 1940.

¹⁷P. Solomon et al., “Physiological and psychological aspects of sensory deprivation,” *Sensory Deprivation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965.

4.3. Meaning as a Problem of Psychological Consciousness

Sensory images represent a universal form of psychic reflection having its origin in the objective activity of the subject. In man, however, sensory images assume a new quality, specifically, their signification. *Meanings* are the most important “formers” of human consciousness.

As is known, a loss in man of even the most important sensory systems — vision and hearing — does not destroy consciousness. Even in blind, deaf-mute children who have mastered specifically human operations involving objective actions and language (which, of course, can only take place under conditions of special education) a normal consciousness is formed different from the consciousness of sighted and hearing people only in its extremely poor sensory fabric.¹⁸ It is another matter when because of these or other circumstances a “humanization” of activity and social contact does not take place. In this case, regardless of how complete the preservation of sensory motor spheres is, consciousness does not develop. This phenomenon (we will call it “the phenomenon of Kaspar Gauzer”) is now widely known.

Thus meanings interpret the world in the consciousness of man. Although language appears to be the carrier of meaning, yet language is not its demiurge. Behind linguistic meanings hide socially developed methods of action (operations) in the process of which people change and perceive objective reality. In other words, meanings represent an ideal form of the existence of the objective world, its properties, connections, and relationships, disclosed by cooperative social practice, transformed and hidden in the material of language. For this reason meanings in themselves, that is, in abstraction from their functioning in individual consciousness, are not so “psychological” as the socially recognized reality that lies behind them.¹⁹

Meanings constitute the subject matter for study in linguistics, semiotics, and logic. Also, as one of the “formers” of individual consciousness, meanings necessarily enter into the circle of problems of psychology. The main difficulty of the psychological problem of meaning is that in meaning arise all of those contradictions that confront the broader problem of the relationship of the logical and the psychological in thought, in logic, and in the psychology of comprehension.

Within the framework of subjective-empirical psychology this problem was resolved in the sense that concepts (*resp.*, literal meanings) appear to be a psychological product — a product of association and generalization, of impressions in the consciousness of the individual subject, the results of which

¹⁸A. I. Meshcheryakov, *Blind Deaf-mute Children, Moscow*, 1974; G. S. Gurgenzidze and E. V. Il'enkov, “Preeminent achievements of Soviet science,” *Problems of Philosophy, No. 6*, 1975.

¹⁹In this context there is no need to distinguish sharply between concepts and literal meanings, logical operations and operations of meaning — Author's *note*.

are fixed in words. This point of view found its expression, as is known, not only in psychology but also in the concepts of those who psychologize logic.

Another alternative is acknowledging that concepts and operations with concepts are directed by objective, logical laws, and that psychology has to do only with deviations from these laws that are found in primitive thinking, under conditions of pathology or strong emotions, and finally, that the problem of psychology includes the study of the ontogenetic development of concepts and thought. Investigation of this process did occupy the main place in the psychology of thought. It is enough to indicate the work of Piaget and Vygotskii and the large number of Soviet and foreign papers on the psychology of learning.

Research on the formation in children of concepts and logical (mental) operations contributed significantly to science. It was shown that concepts are by no means formed in the head of a child in the same way that sensory generic images are formed, but that they represent the result of a process of appropriating "ready," historically developed meaning, and that this process takes place in the activity of the child under conditions of communication with people around him. In learning how to carry out one action or another he masters corresponding operations, which in their compressed, idealized form are also present in meaning.

It is understood that at first the process of mastering meanings takes place in external activity of the child with material objects and in sympraxic contacts. At early stages the child acquires concrete meanings directly related to objects; later the child also masters purely logical operations, but these are also in the external, exteriorized form — because, of course, otherwise they simply cannot be communized. Being interiorized, they form abstract meanings and concepts, and their movement constitutes an internal mental activity, an activity in the "plane of consciousness."

This process was studied in detail in recent years by P. Ya. Gal'perin, 'who developed an elegant theory that he called "the theory of formation of mental actions and concepts by levels"; at the same time he was developing a concept about the orientational basis of actions, the characteristics of this basis, and suitable types of **training**.²⁰

The practical and theoretical productivity of these and subsequent numerous investigations **is indisputable**. At the same time the problem under investigation was, from the very beginning, strictly limited; it is the problem of goaldirected, "nonspontaneous" formation of mental processes on ex-

²⁰P. Ya. Gal'perin, "The development of research on the formation of mental actions," *Psychological Science in the USSR*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1959; P. Ya. Gal'perin, "The psychology of thought and the study of the formation of mental actions according to levels," in: *Investigations of Thought in Soviet Psychology*, Moscow, 1966.

ternally imposed "matrices" or "parameters." Correspondingly, the analysis concentrated on carrying out assigned actions; as far as their origins were concerned, that is the process of goal formation and motivation of activity that they realized (in the given case, training), that remained beyond the limits of direct investigation. It is understood that under these conditions there is no need to distinguish precisely in the system of activity between actions and means of carrying them out; there is no need for systemic analysis of the individual consciousness.

Consciousness as a form of psychic reflection, however, cannot be reduced to the functioning of meanings learned from outside which, unfolding, direct the external and internal activity of the subject. Meanings and the operations contained within them in themselves, that is, in their abstraction from internal relations of the system of activity and consciousness, are not at all the subject of psychology. They become its subject only if they are taken in those relationships, in the movement of the system of relationships.

This follows from the very nature of the psyche. As has already been said, psychic reflection comes about as the result of the splitting of life processes of the subject into processes that carry out his direct biotic relations and "signal" processes that mediate them. The development of internal relations, elicited by this splitting, finds its expression in the development of the structure of activity and, on this basis, also in the development of the forms of psychic reflection. Further, at the level of the individual there takes place such transformation of these forms that, having been fixed in language (languages), they assume a quasi-independent existence as an objective, ideal phenomenon. And they are constantly repeated by processes taking place in the heads of concrete individuals. This constitutes the internal "mechanism" of their transmission from generation to generation and the condition of their enrichment by means of individual contributions.

Here we approach in earnest the problem that is a real stumbling block for the psychological analysis of consciousness. This is the problem of the characteristics of functioning of knowledge, concepts, and mental models, on the one hand, in the system of social relations in social consciousness, and on the other hand, in the activity of the individual realizing his social connections, in his consciousness.

As has already been said, consciousness is bound by its genesis to the isolation of actions that takes place in work, the cognitive results of which are abstracted from real purposeful human activity and are idealized in the form of language meanings. Communized, they become the property of the consciousness of individuals. Here they do not in the least lose their abstractness; they carry in themselves methods, objective conditions, and results of actions regardless of the subjective motivation of the human activity in which they are formed. At early stages when there is still a commonness of motives of activity among the participators in collective work, meanings as a **phenom-**

enon of individual consciousness are found in relations of direct adequacy. This relation, however, is not preserved. It decomposes together with the decomposition of initial relations of individuals to material conditions of work and means of production, the development of social division of work and personal **property**.²¹ As a result, socially developed meanings begin to live in the consciousness of individuals as if with a double life. Still another internal relation develops, still another movement of meanings in the system of individual consciousness.

This unique internal relation is evident in the simplest psychological facts. Thus, for example, everyone who studied some time ago knows very well the significance of examination marks and the results that followed them. Nonetheless, for the consciousness of each individual the mark may have an essentially different meaning: let us say, as a step (or obstacle) on the way toward the chosen profession, or as a means of winning approval in the eyes of those around him, or perhaps in some other way. It is this circumstance that makes it necessary for psychology to distinguish the recognized objective significance from its significance for the subject. In order to avoid duplication of terms I prefer to speak in the latter case about the **personal sense**. Then the example given may be expressed thus: The significance of the mark can acquire a different personal sense in the consciousness of the learners.

Although the understanding proposed by me of the relation of the concepts of significance and sense was explained more than once, it is still not infrequently interpreted completely erroneously. Obviously, it is necessary to return once more to the analysis of the concept of personal sense.

First, let us say a few words about the objective conditions that lead to a differentiation in individual consciousness of significance and sense. In his well-known paper, a criticism of A. Wagner, Marx noted that objects of the external world assimilated by people appeared to them initially as **means of satisfying their needs**, as something that appeared to them as "blessings." "They ascribe to an object a positive character as if it belonged to the object itself," wrote Marx.²² This idea sets off a very important characteristic of consciousness at various stages of development, specifically that objects are reflected in language and consciousness merged with the human needs concretized (objectivized) in them. This merging, however, later is destroyed. The inevitability of its destruction lies in the objective contradictions of the production of goods, which gives rise to the opposition of concrete to abstract work and leads to the alienation of human activity.

This problem inevitably confronts analysis, which understands the limitation of the representation that significance in individual consciousness is

²¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, Works, Vol. 46, Part 1, pp. 1748.

²² K. Marx and F. Engels, Works, Vol. 19, p. 378.

only a more or less full and complete projection of the "supraindividual" significance existing in the given society. It is not at all eliminated by references to the fact that meanings are interpreted by concrete features of the individual, by his former experience, by the uniqueness of his circumstances, temperament, etc.

The problem about which we are speaking arises from the real duality of existence of meanings for the subject. This duality consists of the fact that meanings appear before the subject both in their independent existence, as objects of his consciousness, and at the same time as means and "mechanisms" of perception, that is, functioning in processes that present an objective activity. In this functioning, meanings necessarily enter into internal relations that connect them with other "former-s" of individual consciousness; it is only in these internal relations that they form their psychological characteristics.

We will express this another way. When into the individual subject's psychic reflection of the world enter products of social-historical practice idealized in their meanings, then these meanings assume new systemic qualities. The disclosure of these qualities constitutes one of the tasks of **psychological science**.

The most difficult point here is that meanings lead a double life. They are produced by society and have their history in the development of language, in the development of forms of social consciousness; meanings express the movement of human knowledge and its cognitive means as well as an ideological representation of society — religious, philosophical, political. In this, their objective existence, they are subordinated to social-historical laws and also to the internal logic of their development.

In all its inexhaustible riches, in all the multifaceted nature of this life of meaning (just think: all science is concerned with it!) meaning has a completely hidden other life, another movement: its functioning in the process of activity and consciousness of concrete individuals, although it is only through these processes that meanings can exist.

In this their second life, meanings are individualized and "subjectivized," but only in the sense that indirectly their movement in the system of relations of society is no longer contained in them; they enter into another system of relations, into another movement. But this is what is remarkable: They do not in any way lose their social-historical nature, their objectivity.

One of the facets of movement of meanings in consciousness of concrete individuals is their "return" to the sensory object world about which we were speaking earlier. While in their abstractness, in their "supraindividuality," meanings are indifferent to the sensory forms in which the world is disclosed to the concrete subject (it can be said that in themselves meanings are devoid of sensuality), their functioning in establishing real life connections necessarily presupposes their relatedness to sensory impressions.

Of course, the sensory-object relatedness of meanings in the consciousness of the subject may be indirect, it may be realized through quite complex chains of thought operations, intertwined in them, particularly when meanings reflect activity that appears only in its distant oblique forms. But in normal circumstances this relativity always exists and disappears only in the products of their movement, in their exteriorization.

Another facet of the movement of meanings in the system of individual consciousness lies in their special subjectivity, which is expressed in the partiality that they acquire. This facet, however, is disclosed only in the analysis of internal relations that connect meanings with still another "former" of consciousness – *personal sense*.

4.4. Personal Sense

Psychology has for a long time been describing the subjectivity, the partiality of human consciousness. Its manifestations were seen in the selectivity of attention, in the emotional coloring of representations, in the dependence of cognitive processes on needs and inclinations. In his time Leibniz expressed this dependence in the well-known aphorism: "...if geometry were to contradict our passions and our interests as morals do, then we would argue against it and we would violate it in spite of all the evidence of Euclid and Archimedes. ..."²³

The difficulty lies in the psychological explanation of the partiality of consciousness. The phenomena of consciousness seemed to have a dual determination, external and internal. Correspondingly, they were treated as if belonging to two different spheres of the psyche: the sphere of cognitive processes and the sphere of needs and *affectiveness*. The problem of relating these spheres – resolved in the spirit of rationalistic conceptions or in the spirit of the psychology of deep experience – was invariably interpreted from an anthropological point of view, from the point of view of an *interaction* of various factors – forces different in their nature.

The real nature of the duality of the phenomena of individual consciousness, however, does not lie in their subordination to these independent factors.

We will not enter here into those features that distinguish the various social-economic formations in this respect. For the general theory of individual consciousness, the main thing is that activity of concrete individuals always remains "squeezed into" (*inseré*) the available forms of the manifestations of these objective opposites, which find their oblique, phenomenal expression in consciousness, in its specific internal movement.

²³ G. W. von Leibniz, *New Experiments on Human Intelligence*, Moscow–Leningrad, 1936, p. 88.

The activity of man historically does not change its general structure, its "macrostructure." At all stages of historical development it is realized by conscious actions in which a transition of goals into objective products is accomplished and which is subordinated to the motives that elicit it. What is radically changed is the character of the relationships that connect goals and motives of activity.

These relationships are also psychologically decisive. The fact is that for the subject himself, perception and achievement by him of concrete goals, mastery of means and operations, of action is a method of conforming his life, satisfying and developing his material and spiritual needs, which are objectivized and transformed in the motives of his activity. No matter whether these motives are or are not perceived by the subject, they signal themselves in the form of his experiencing an interest, a desire, or a passion; their function, taken from the aspect of consciousness, is that they "evaluate" the life significance for the subject of objective circumstances and his actions in these circumstances, giving them personal sense that **does not** directly correspond to their understood objective meaning. In given circumstances the lack of correspondence of sense and meaning in individual consciousness may take on the character of a real alienation between them, even their opposition.

In a manufacturing society this alienation appears inevitably, and in people at both social poles. A hired worker accounts for himself, of course, in the product he produces; in other words, the product appears before him in the objective meaning (*Bedeutung*) for the most part within limits necessary to enable him to carry on his work functions sensibly. But the sense (*Sinn*) of his work for him himself lies not in that but in the payment for which he works. "The sense of a twelve-hour period of work does not lie in that he weaves, spins, drills, etc., but in that it is a means of **earning** which gives him the possibility of eating, going to the tavern, **sleeping**,"²⁴ This alienation appears also in the opposite pole of society: For dealers in minerals, notes Marx, minerals do not have the sense of **minerals**.²⁵

Destroying the relations of personal property destroys this opposition of meanings and sense in the consciousness of individuals; their nonconformity, however, is preserved.

The necessity of their nonconformity was laid down in ancient prehistory of human consciousness, in the existence in animals of two types of sensitivity that mediate their behavior in the existence in the object world. As is known, perception of animals is limited by influences signally connected with satisfaction of their needs, although only eventually, **potentially**.²⁶ But needs may

²⁴ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 43 2.

²⁵ Marx and F. Engels, *From Their Early Works*, p. 594.

²⁶ This served as a basis also for the German authors distinguishing between environment (*Umwelt*), as that which is perceived by animals and world (*Welt*), which is discovered only by man's consciousness.

realize a function of psychic regulation appearing only in the form of stimulating objects (and correspondingly, of means of mastering them or defending against them). In other words, in the sensitivity of animals, external properties of objects and their ability to satisfy one need or another are not separated one from the other. Let us remember, a dog in response to the action of a conditioned food stimulus strains toward it and licks it.²⁷ The inseparability of the perception by animals of the external appearance of objects from its needs does not mean, however, that these coincide. On the contrary, in the course of evolution their connections became more and more mobile and remarkably complicated, preserving only the impossibility of their being isolated. They can be distinguished only at the human level when verbal meanings are forced into the internal connections of both of these forms of sensuality.

I say that the meanings are forced in (although perhaps it would have been better to say “enter in” or “are immersed in”), only in order to stress the problem. Actually, as you know, in their objectivity, that is, as phenomena of social consciousness, meanings for the individual interpret objects independently of their relations to his life, to his needs and motives. Even for the consciousness of a drowning man, the straw he grasps still preserves its meaning as a straw. It would be another matter if that straw – if only in illusion – would turn at that moment into a lifesaver.

Although at the beginning stages of the formation of consciousness meanings appear merged with personal sense, in this merging their nonconformity is already implicitly contained; later it unavoidably assumes its obvious explicit forms. This makes it necessary in analysis to isolate the personal sense as still another forming system of individual consciousness. These are the things that constitute that “cryptic,” according to an expression of L. S. Vygotskii, plane of consciousness that quite often is interpreted in psychology not as being formed during activity of the subject, during the development of motivation, but as if indirectly expressing internal moving forces that are from the very beginning incorporated in the very nature of man.

In individual consciousness the meanings assimilated from without actually seem to separate and simultaneously unite between them both types of sensitivity, sensory impressions of external reality in which the individual’s activity takes place and forms of sensory experiencing of the motives of the activity, satisfaction or lack of satisfaction of the needs hidden behind it.

As distinct from meaning, personal sense, like the sensory fabric of consciousness, does not have its own “supraindividual,” “nonpsychological” existence. If in the consciousness of the subject external sensitivity connects meanings with the reality of the objective world, then the personal sense

connects them with the reality of his own life in this world, with its motives. Personal sense **also creates the partiality of human consciousness.**

It was mentioned above that in individual consciousness meanings are “psychologized,” returning to the reality of the world sensorily presented to man. Another decisive circumstance converting meanings into a psychological category is that functioning in the system of individual consciousness, meanings realize not themselves but a movement embodying in them the personal sense of the meanings – that being-for-himself concrete subject.

Psychologically, that is, in the system of the consciousness of the subject and not as its object or product, meanings generally do not exist except in realizing one sense or another, just as the subject’s actions and operations do not exist except as realizing one or another of his activities aroused by a motive or a need. Another aspect is that the personal sense is always a sense of something: “Pure,” nonobjective sense is the same kind of absurdity as a nonobjective creature.

Embodying sense in meanings is a deeply intimate, psychologically meaningful process not in the least automatic or momentary. In the creation of literary works of art, in the practice of moral and political education, this process appears in all its fullness. Scientific psychology knows this process only in its partial expression: in the phenomena of “rationalization” by people of their actual motives, in experiencing the torment of transition from the thought to the word (L. S. Vygotskii quotes Tyutchev: “I forgot the word which I wanted to say, and the thought, lacking material form, will return to the chamber of shadows.”)

In its most naked forms the process about which we are speaking appears in conditions of class society and struggle for ideology. Under these conditions personal meanings reflecting motives engendered by actions of life relationships of man may not adequately embody their objective meanings, and then they begin to live as if in someone else’s garments. It is necessary to imagine the major contradiction that gives rise to this phenomenon. As is known, as distinct from the life of society, the life of the individual does not “speak for itself,” that is, the individual does not have his own language with meanings developed within it; perception by him of phenomena of reality may take place only through his assimilation of externally “ready” meanings – meanings, perceptions, views that he obtains from contact with one or another form of individual or mass communication. This makes it possible to introduce into the individual’s consciousness and impose on him distorted or fantastic representations and ideas, including such as have no basis in his real practical life experience. Deprived of this basis they **find** their real weakness in the consciousness of man; and turning into **stereotypes**, like any stereotypes, they are so resistant that only serious real life confrontations can dispel them. But even dispelling them does not lead to averting disintegration of consciousness or its inadequacy; in itself it creates

²⁷I. P. Pavlov, Complete Collected Works, Vol. 3, Book 1, p. 157.

only a devastation capable of turning into a psychological catastrophe. It is necessary in addition that in the consciousness of the individual there take place a reshaping of subjective personal meanings into other more adequate meanings.

A more intense analysis of such reshaping of personal meanings into adequate (more adequate) meanings indicates that it takes place under conditions of the struggle in society for the consciousness of people. Here I want to say that the individual does not simply "stand" before a certain "window" displaying meanings among which he has but to make a choice, that these meanings — representations, concepts, ideas — do not passively wait for his choice but energetically dig themselves into his connections with people forming the circle of his real contacts. If the individual in given life circumstances is forced to make a choice, then that choice is not between meanings but between colliding social positions that are expressed and recognized through these meanings.

In the sphere of ideological representations this process is unavoidable and has a universal character only in a class society. It persists, however, also in conditions of a socialistic, communistic society to the extent that here also appear features of individual man, features comprising his personal relations and social and life situations; this process is preserved also because of his own unique features, those of a physical being, and because of concrete external circumstances, which cannot be identical for all.

What does not disappear and cannot disappear is the constantly recurring nonconformity of personal meanings that carry within them the intentionality and partiality of the consciousness of the subject, and meanings that are "indifferent" to him through which personal meanings can be expressed. For this reason the internal movement of a developed system of individual consciousness is also full of dramatic effect. It is created by senses that cannot "express themselves in adequate meanings, senses that have lost their real life basis and for this reason sometimes agonizingly discredit themselves in the consciousness of the subject; it is created finally by the existence of motives-goals conflicting with one another.

There is no need to repeat that this internal movement of individual consciousness has its origin in the movement of objective activity of man, that behind its dramatic effects hide the dramatic effects of his real life, that for this reason scientific psychology of consciousness is not possible outside the investigation of the activity of the subject, the forms of its direct existence.

In conclusion, I cannot but touch on the problem of so-called life psychology, the *psychology of experience*, which has recently again been evaluated in our literature.²⁸ From what has been said, it directly follows that

²⁸ See *Problems of Psychology*, Nos. 4 and 5, 1971; Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, 1972.

although scientific psychology must not exclude from the field of its consideration the internal world of man, yet its study cannot be separated from the investigation of activity and does not constitute any kind of special direction of scientific psychological investigation. That **which we** call internal experiences is the essence of the phenomenon, taking place on the surface of the system of consciousness, and it is in this form that consciousness appears directly for the subject. For this reason, the experiences, interests, boredom, inclinations, or remorse do not disclose their nature to the subject; although they seem to be internal forces moving through his activity, their real function is only leading the subject to their real source in that they signal the personal sense of events taking place in his life, they make him seem to stop the flow of his activity for an instant to contemplate the life values he has constructed in order to find himself in them, or perhaps to review them.

Thus man's consciousness, like activity itself, is not additive. It is not a plane, nor even a volume, filled with images and processes. It is not connections of his separate "units" but an internal movement of his formers, activities included in total movement realizing the real life of the individual in society. The activity of man makes up the substance of his consciousness.

Psychological analysis of activity and consciousness discloses only their general systemic qualities and understandably abstracts itself from the features of special psychic processes — processes of perception and thought, memory and learning, oral communication. But these processes exist in themselves only in the described relations of the system at one level or another. For this reason, although investigations of these processes constitute a specific problem, in no way do they appear independent of how problems of activity and consciousness are resolved, for this determines the methodology.

And finally, the principal thing. The analysis of activity and individual consciousness is, of course, derived from the existence of a real physical subject. Initially, however, that is, **before** and **within** this analysis, the subject appears only as some kind of abstraction, a psychologically "unfulfilled" whole. Only as a result of the steps taken by research does the subject disclose himself, concretely-psychologically, as a person. In addition, it develops that analysis of the individual consciousness in its turn must resort to the category of personality. For this reason it was necessary to introduce into this analysis such concepts as the concept of "partiality of consciousness" and "personal sense," behind which categories there lies a problem that has not yet been touched on — **the problem of systemic psychological investigation of personality.**