

Intermediary Action and Development

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The article looks at the possibility to continue L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept in today's world. The act of mediation in and of itself is presented as a problem, and an object of study, and it is represented as Intermediary Action. In attempts to determine the meaning of a sign the intermediary action becomes a human to which this sign is directed. Assigning a sign is the perception of the very transition "natural—cultural". Here the meaning acquires the function of a pattern of action. The pattern acts as an object of coaction and is built like a relationship and border between the required and the other. Then, the Intermediary action develops into the perception of the pattern as the support system of activity. The perception of the support system is the inclusion of the action in the space of its possibilities — its field. The inclusion in the space of possibilities needs action individualization. The perception of the limits of the space of possibilities as the scope of intention is the construction of Personal action.

Key words: Mediation, intermediary action, presence, pertinence, development, transition, pattern, meaning, support, field, sense-field.

I

Perhaps, the main thing in the reflections about the contemporaneity of cultural-historical conception of L.S. Vygotsky is the idea of its new perception, with regard to which testing of new prospects is possible. Such a conception is important, because many categories of both Vygotsky himself and of his followers — "activity theorists" — seem to be "already understood", they become "commonplace". The loss of intrigue in the conception, its use only as an authoritative evidence of some judgements is the symptom of its transition from constructive existence to a "museum" one. And if so, then it is high time to attempt to establish new horizons of cultural-historical and activities of psychology, for which it is necessary to reveal their latent (supposed, but not distinguished) assumptions and concepts of the questions themselves that are not asked, but need to be investigated logically.

II

The psychology of the of the nineteenth — beginning of the twentieth century was directed towards the "exposure", showing the "mentality as such". The challenge of this psychology is classically scientific, experimental investigation of "mental phenomena". In this context the mentality was perceived and explored as a source of ac-

tivity (Apperception, Will) "inside" the individual, and the result of activity itself was perceived and explored as Conception — vision (supposing) of something outside oneself.

According to classical behaviorism, the activity of living beings (including humans) was perceived and experimentally constructed as stimulus response. This concept has been criticized many times, but, while accepting criticism, it is important to note and to point out that at the same time what had been earlier called mentality was now firstly implicitly represented as a definite *mode of existence in the World* (as in the world of stimuli of different strength).

In controversy with behaviorism Gestalt-psychologists defined the World as a world of unclosed structures, and in such a way placed activity as a locking framework of an act — a creative act, in which "functional fixation of the past experience" [16] is being overcome.

The very "displacement" of mental phenomenon "from" individual to the World and discussions about how this individual's *place* is arranged in the World (as reactivity or as productivity) is a considerable change of the discourse. It is here that the questions arise as to how something, which is called "psychical", is built and functions in such a way that it stimulates (or prevents) the act of individual's inclusion into the world. And this "World" itself also must be defined in its relation to the individual — relation of stimulation, of inserting into the framework, of regulation through "collective views" or

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“... as potency (possibility that is being revealed and realized) of the *supports of cultivating* mental in the function of *means* to “enter” the World’s life, and to perceive it.

III

The Cultural Event called “Cultural-Historical concept of L.S. Vygotsky” is related to some key ideas the meaning of which is to be reconstructed. I propose my version of their understanding taking the priority of considering and interpretation both of the thinking situation of Vygotsky himself and of the situation after him, and up to the present time.

The idea of “overcoming the natural in the cultural” may be understood as an idea about the conditions of *presence* of Conscience and Psyche¹: Conscience and Psyche can’t be taken as given, they don’t reside and are not “kept somewhere”, they just come out, appear only by a certain transition, effort, action (and reconstruction of this x-action). The latent form of its realization which has already become and “mastered” behaviour is just that element of the natural, which can put various “masks” on – molecular-informational (gene), stimulus, the form of regulatory prescriptions (“cultural”). *Natural behaviour is behaviour which is included into some form via action or in latency of the action of including itself*. Revealing and constructing of the *form* (coherence) of one’s behaviour is an Act of Development.

The word combination “psychological tool” points to the fact that “culture” and “meaning”² are present in behaviour only and just as means of the entrance of the “world” into the individual’s behaviour, and through this – the entrance of the individual’s behaviour into the world. Their “task” is to overcome the latent initiating causes of behaviour and thus – transition of the human himself to *constructing* the form of his behaviour (transition to randomness). The idea and knowledge changed the place of activity *result* (which they occupied in classical psychology) to the place of *means* of this activity construction and reconstruction – its “trap” (according to the apt expression of A.A. Puzyrej [33]). Just here the key question emerges about the fact of how to build an activity field with the help of meaning, i.e. as Vygotsky said, – “the actual future field” [13] or in following works, “sense-field” [12] – some “projection” of meaning to the behavioral locality.

The judgement on the “transition from the interpsychical form to the intrapsychical” supposes that the initial “place” of mentality is not “in” individuals, but in their interaction with each other – one individual addressing another with the help of a “psychological tool”. In such a way it is supposed that psyche (mentality) and conscience can’t be mastered by an outside observer, they

need an active participation of the Other for their recognition (objectivation) – the Other builds their “trap”. So is the requirement to the methods of “double stimulation” that form the core of “experimental-genetic” (“genetic-simulated”) mode of inquiry. The “nonclassic psychology” is based just on this method (D.B. Elkonin [42]). Here, in some apt cases, where experimental genesis is built, one can raise a question about the *conditions* on which the “experimenter” is really present in the behaviour of the “guinea pig”, it gets its own place in it and gets it in such a way that “communication” turns into the “psychological tool” – the search support and testing of its own activity form by the guinea pig itself. Inasmuch as it occurs, the meaning word of the experimenter is so mastered (grows into) by the guinea pig, that his “thought takes place”, i.e. *takes its stand* in this word.

In a fluent description and interpretation of “nodes” in L.S. Vygotsky’s concept and, respectively, of that “turning point” which has been made in it, it becomes clear what was overcome in the research thinking, but there remains a question if anything remained, and if it did then what it was. The intentional object, the noema of “pre-Vygotskian” psychology with all its vicissitudes and discussions was the means of existence of conscience. Here the concepts of the research issues and tasks were born. Vygotsky’s discoveries concern the same object. Thus the conscience itself arises, comes out and expands in its system and sense framework only during the mediation process, and so it itself exists only in cultural-historical context. However, in Vygotsky’s thoughts one can “hear” and sense the unlikely presence of other questions – questions to another object.

Vygotsky’s texts contain the implicit *confirmation of the performance* of mediation acts. However, the interpsychological form arises and is constructed only *when* a sign (meaning) becomes a psychological tool. And only *when* this occurs, then the natural activity form is overcome and the psychological system is built. And only *on this condition* the phenomenal field is overcome in the sense one. Vygotsky’s thought is supported by the *apt cases* of mediation. By the mediation itself can’t be understood from the standpoint of *naturalism* – as “cultural automatics”, some *unconditional activity* of “culture”, and culture itself can’t be understood as “determining possibility”³ which replaced another, biological, mode of determination.

IV

The historical beginning of Activity Theory can be considered the formation of the “Kharkov group” (Kharkov school of psychology) of L.S. Vygotsky’s disciples and followers – their divergence with Vygotsky. This

¹ After M. Heidegger’s work, i.e. asking myself a question of such things as psyche (mentality), conscience, meaning, action. Then, even without references to Heidegger while answering this question, P.J. Galperin asserted that psyche (mentality) exists in the world in the function of orientation – outlining the support of the future action [14].

² Special analysis is needed for evaluating the evolution of Vygotsky’s understanding of meaning (“work” of a sign) from “The Psychology of Art” through “The History of the Development of Highest Mental Functions” to Chapter VII of “Thinking and Speech”.

³ Especially taking into account the historical timeline of turning of some cultural forms into “simulacra” [7].

divergence itself was deeply felt by all the participants, the evidence of which is not only verbal recollections⁴, but also publications [27, p. 231–235].

The key issue of A.N. Leontyev's texts of that period is the question of what is hidden "behind the meaning". The answer to this question was the statement that "behind the meaning" there is an external object-oriented action. It should be noted that meaning was perceived only from the point of its "structure" — as a generalization (according to Vygotsky's works), but not in its function (of mediation). Just this structure of meaning (of a word) was tested experimentally [8; 14; 21; 27], and on the basis of the experiments it was maintained that the generalization is built through transference of the means of the external action from one object-oriented situation to another.

In P.J. Galperin's experiments of the Kharkov period [14], the real tool played the role of the initial "psychological tool"; it played its role to the extent necessary for a person to act in accordance "with the logic of the tool", while overcoming "the logic of hand".

In the Kharkov group's research, meaning and generalization were separated from the action and represented as "secondary", derivative of the external action that served as initial and "primary". 22 years after in P.J. Galperin's theory of planned stage-by-stage formation of mental actions such a position of external action (according to Galperin's terminology — "material action") was established. *The mediation concept gained a gnoseological tint.*

In the famous experimental research by A.N. Leontyev and his colleagues on sensation genesis and formation of pitch hearing a question about the relation between the object-oriented action and conception (sensation, perception) was raised. It was demonstrated that the object-oriented action is initial in the image formation. But it is initial only in the cases of active attempts to reconstruct the object's image. During these experiments, the guinea pigs got new "functional organs" built, with the help of which they "sensed" either latent reality or the reality that is difficult to reconstruct. While recollecting L.S. Vygotsky's logic and accents and transforming of the gnoseological modus into the ontic one, one can affirm that here the individual's corporeity itself was constructed as an organ. The psychophysiological human system served as a Means — a means of appearance of the "nonappearing" and, in such a way, the means of building of an object of action.

For A.V. Zaporozhets, the condition of voluntary movement appearing is its turning into a perceptible movement, i.e. gaining of the interoceptive ("intramuscular") sense of the own movement by the individual⁵. The appearance of similar "internal" sensations and their control was represented in the outstanding experiments of A.V. Zaporozhets and M.I. Lisina. Connecting this discovery with the interpretation of A.N. Leontyev's

experiments, one may affirm that the individual's psychophysiological system becomes an organ of action on the condition of a connection between the external and internal⁶ motility, extero- and interoception coherence. But what connects them?

A brief description of the "nodes" of activity theory may be summed up by two critical questions.

What is the interpsychic form of activity according to the key studies of A.N. Leontyev? There is no place for the experimenter's actions during the experiment in reports and descriptions of experiments. He plays the role of situational initiator and moves aside as soon as the guinea pig enters the situation. In accordance to this in interpretations and conclusions the action was attributed to the guinea pig, sometimes directly and sometimes even without mentioning, it was as if it "belonged" to it. So what, when one says "action", does he mean the individual's action, and not the "interpsychic form"?

In the experiment of A.V. Zaporozhets and M.I. Lisina, there is another turn. The turning point of the experiment that made it successful is the demonstration of the screen of the oscilloscope with the record, "picture" of "intracorporal" reactions dynamic to the guinea pig; the experimenter's screen *turns* to the it. Nevertheless, in the analysis and conclusions A.V. Zaporozhets, as well as A.N. Leontyev, attribute the action to the guinea pigs themselves. Moreover, the texts of all "activity theorists" concern the "social nature" of both psyche (mentality) and activity. The presence of the Other in the construction of the action seems to have been perceived as something which is self-evident and doesn't require any special analysis, and so it was "taken out of context", and there was no place for it in the investigated activity itself. But the experimenter (the Other) created the Field of activity for the guinea pig — the "field of the action mode" as P.J. Galperin wrote and spoke.

In the texts of "activity theorists", a lot of space is taken by the judgements about the categories of Motive and Purpose. However, in the key experimental investigations these entities were not represented as special phenomena (they were more attributed than "exposed"). One can have an impression that motive and purpose are some conceptions that are "placed" at the beginning and the end of the individual activity, to its transitional "points". But what is the main point of the actions of initiation, i.e. transition to performing and transition to end, and how is it related with the main point of "the individual's action"?

The analysis of "activity theorists'" texts (as well as that of Vygotsky's texts) suggests the idea of the fluctuation of the investigated Object. On the one hand, that is a "classical" object — an image, thought, in other words, "psychical phenomena". Their experimental genesis in particular was constructed by one means or another. However, in the very discussion of Vygotsky's disciples with their Teacher and in their experimental investiga-

⁴ Of D.B. Elkonin.

⁵ The statement about the role of interoception in movement construction is the leading issue in the works of N.A. Bernstein (as well as of L.S. Vygotsky and J. Piaget, born in 1896) [6].

⁶ "Internal motility" is A.V. Zaporozhets's own term [23].

tions another Object is hidden that is the construction of the action as of a special *form* of activity, i.e. the Act of Mediation of construction of the action, of increasing the activity of the *form* of action is “hidden”. Here it is appropriate to mention the words of E.G. Judin⁷ about the fact that in the Activity Theory the activity itself played the role of an explanatory principle, and not as the object of investigation.

V

Transition to the analysis of the very act of mediation and, in such a way, representing this act as an Object of investigation, in my opinion, dates back to the publication of D.B. Elkonin’s article “Notes on the Development of Object-Oriented Actions in Early Childhood” [42]. This turning point was followed in my works [38; 39; 40]. The act of mediation was called Intermediary Action (IA) in them.

I would like to point out specially that while investigating the IA (the act of mediation itself), i.e. while creating the conditions for performing it (the completeness of the experimental genesis), one should not appeal to such concepts as “development”, “culture”, “action”, “communication”, “sense”, etc. as to the concepts which convey some “self-understood” realities. What is non-critically taken for “reality” will become truly real and understood only while searching for the conditions of birth for the act of development, cultural form, communication, form of action, sense and so on, for the conditions of the means of their “life” to come “into the world”.

Speaking about the terms of D.B. Elkonin the key question of both Vygotsky and the followers of the activity theory was the question about in what way a human (a child) can take his/her place in society (to become “adult”). I suppose that to this question another one should be added – in what way the society (“adults”) can take their place in the element of activity formation of a human (a “child”). And they should take their place in such a way that this element would not cease because of being replaced by some external stimulation, and on the contrary it would come to the completeness of its form – to the form of *personal* action. Only after fulfilling this requirement one can speak about the connection between mediation and development⁸ – the initial prin-

ciple and simultaneously the main “unknown” of both cultural-historical and activity theories⁹.

The requirement as to finding one human’s place in the activity formation of the other one, that is, the requirement as to *pertinence*, gives meditation the status of not only social and even not social-cultural, but existential situation of human formation. Thus, the necessity to represent the Act of Medication itself, the very Event of IA, and not only the consequences of its successful fulfillment, as *intentional object of the contemporary cultural-historical psychology* is even more accentuated.

IV

The first thing that must be understood while analyzing the IA is the conditions of appearance (birth) and the framework of the interpsychic form, i.e. the very situation of compatibility (com-patibility) of the person-intermediary and the “mediated” person – the situation of “wedging in”¹⁰ of the psychological tool into the spontaneous activity. It is necessary that this is the situation of patency of the *transition*, “turning point” of activity, and this transition itself should be accepted, noted and retained, and not just passed obscurely. A sensible transitivity is a condition of harking to the addressed message of the intermediary, i.e. of understanding of the activity situation through its message. Here it should be noted that meaning becomes a psychological tool only when it points to something and, in such a way, *extracts* something out of the environment (“medium”)¹¹. From this point of view the addressed meaning is Action, something can be characterized as elucidating and emphasizing (enhancing), and something, on the contrary, – as hiding and “obstructing”¹². Defining is a re-focusing of the activity environment. Nevertheless, for the “mediated” this elucidating, emphasizing and movement of accent doesn’t become evident only in view of the intermediary’s message to him. The “mediated” has to test, to prove and in doing so *to reconstruct the meaning in the material of his/her own activity*. Only in this case one can speak of the fact that the message is affirmed and, from this point, *realized* – the defining is completed and the Event of IA – together with it: the IA was born as an addressed one, as a *Challenge*¹³. So *what* is predicated in the intermediary’s message, which of his aspects?

⁷ In the book “Systems approach and activity principle” (M.: Nauka, 1978).

⁸ And that is especially relevant in the contemporary sociocultural situation, where the simulacra are constructed as “psychological tools”, i.e. the mediation is [7; see also: 34].

⁹ See.: D.B. Elkonin about the relationship of functional genesis and ontogenesis [41].

¹⁰ Metaphor of D.B. Elkonin in the analysis of the historical origin of childhood periods and of L. F. Obukhova in the analysis of the situation of mediation [31].

¹¹ In the word that is used only as a system of generalization the denotative-accentuating function is removed, “concealed”. As Gegel said, meaning-generalization is “meaning in itself”. Moreover, this meaning is to be distinguished from the other one (“amphibian are NOT...”), but one should distinguish it so that the distinction itself could be taken for an object of analysis (“amphibian are NOT reptiles”, but not – “NOT furniture”). In the right denotation of the other and following analysis of the distinction (negotiation) itself the meaning will come out in its entirety.

¹² While demonstrating the accent change in the phrase “in the beginning was the action” (but not the word) and speaking that the action was only “in the very beginning”, i.e. it is an undeveloped, primitive form of the thought [10, c. 360], L.S. Vygotsky does not mean that the word itself is Action in the situation of attributing.

¹³ In the articles about the rise of object-oriented actions at an early age D.B. Elkonin and I described the phenomena of predicating of an adult’s mediatory message by a child [40; 42].

The confirmation of an adult's message sent by a child, which gives the signal as to the formation of psychological tool is the attachment of *function* of a Pattern to the adult's words-indications and, accordingly, of the function of this pattern's test, *approval of the adult's word-gesture as a pattern*. In these experiments the child tests and builds its own Course of action [40; 42]. It just tries, tests and builds, but does not immediately "adopt". Admitting and practising the immediate "adopting", "inprinting" of the patterns into the behaviour is a deleterious presumption and practice of traditional mass education in which the very reconstruction of the *transition* to the new activity form is negated — negating the act of development.

A pattern has two sides: first, an open one, that is "what and how it should be", and, secondly, a concealed one, a latent one, which is only *implied*, that is "what and how it should not be". The main idea of the pattern is the *relation* of "permissible" and "forbidden", but not only the image of the "correct" [39, p. 173–180]. However, just this *relation* is not given and is to be reconstructed. In the simplest "do so" is not demonstrated what is "not so"; "not so" is not in the sense of the abstract of "all the rest" besides the "correct", but "not so" comes from the "so" itself.

Now I will give you some examples.

A boy aged one-and-a-half knows only word-gesture "no-no-no" ("forbidden"). While standing near a puddle he makes this gesture in reference to himself, and looking at his father who is standing near he steps into the puddle. The boy needs to try and sense what this "forbidden" looks like — so the situation of the action *limit* looks like [40].

In the classical work of L.F. Obukhova about the introduction of measure for the formation of a quantity concept in the case of 6-year-old children and, in such a way for overcoming of the well-known Piaget phenomena, interesting requests of children are given [32]. Comparing the amounts of water that is poured from equal cups to different ones many children say: "The water is equal, but it *seems* that it is more". The opposition of that that "seems" and of that that is "in reality" is evident — the opposition between one's spontaneous and the other ("correct") view; the opposition of one's own past and new understanding. I suppose, so is the illustration of genuineness of mastering.

In experiments on the mediation of solving the tasks "on understanding"¹⁴ special signs were included with the help of which an image was built that created a space of actions where it was impossible to achieve a solution. In this symbol the immediate attempts to achieve a result dictated by the "provocative" construction of the task were arranged as a definite *means* of action, and thus such a symbol-image played a role of a "pattern" of a blind course of task solving. The correct solution was constructed and achieved, i.e. another space of possible

action was constructed in attempts to transform the very model of the incorrect course of thought. The spontaneity came out, was objectified as a patency and distinctness of the model of the (im)possible action space. In the attempts to negotiate this fact and to build a new model there opened a space of actions that lead to the solution of the task [39].

In the work of E.A. Bugrimenko [9] the conventional position was constructed and investigated as a means of reconstruction of different series equivalence, i.e. as a means of reconstruction of *relations* equivalency. For example, the increase of colour saturation (white, grey, black circles of the same size) was to be imagined as similar to the increase in size of the monochromatic squares. In the experiments one built a transition *from* relation to one's action and the action of another person as made either correctly or incorrectly, *to* the understanding of the "incorrect" action as having some other basis (which is made from another position).

Thus, an action pattern becomes current in its reconstruction and mastering as a *relation*, the relationships of "this" and "other" (as of a positive conception of "not this"). In simple cases the pattern becomes current during the reconstruction of patency of a limit in action (in the given example — of edge of the puddle). The pattern, and the Intermediary together with it, is present as a denotation of the *transition*, as a peculiar "reference point", "zero" in some "coordinate system"¹⁵. Just so is the *place* of the intermediary, so is the condition of the IA's *pertinence* and efficiency. However, as it was already mentioned, this place in its main point can't be current and it can be occupied only during the initiation of trying and testing of the transition itself which is concealed in the pattern.

In the attempts to discover and reconstruct the sense of a psychological tool — its "exemplarity" — the reciprocity of the IA participants is implemented as "a relation of real and ideal forms" [38; 42]. However, one should note that the Ideal form plays here only the role of the reference point and system which require to be discovered and reconstructed. Regarding the ideal form the question about its substance, "what is its sense, what is it *about*", which is put in the presumption of "already existence" of the sense and "already retention of the substance" must follow the question about the mode of existence of sense, about *how the sense (idea) IS*¹⁶, *remains* in the formation of activity.

Following the results of observations and experiments [39; 40], one can speak with confidence about two key conditions for retention of the sense-meaning of the psychological tool in IA.

The first condition is *reversibility of sign operation*¹⁷. A small child doesn't copy the denotation (for example, word-gesture "No-no-no!"), but reconstructs it in

¹⁴ According to the works of M. Wertheimer and K. Duncker, these are the tasks, the solution of which requires Productive Thinking.

¹⁵ Here it is important to recollect the M. Heidegger's thoughts about "Nothing existing" but "a gap" [35; 36].

¹⁶ In contrast to work "Introduction of the developmental psychology" (later republished with title "Developmental psychology") where the Ideal form was understood as a fulfilled action, here I insist on the understanding of the mode of involvement of the Ideal form into the action.

¹⁷ L.S. Vygotsky speaks about the "reverse" attributing of the sign to the initial stimulus in work "Tool and sign in a child's development" and means "reverse action" of the "stimulus of the second order" (sign) to the "stimulus of the first order" [13, p. 64 and other]. And I mean something else, rather opposite relationship between the denoting and the denoted.

the material of the denoted, i.e. of its own corporeity, while turning this reconstruction to the adult (as if saying: “So do you mean *this*?!”) [q.v.: 40]. In the already given example of sign mediation of the task solving the symbol which denotes the space of the possibilities of activity was not copied, but reconstructed on *other* material — the material of the things the manipulation of which was required in the conditions of the task. The denoting and the denoted swapped places (functions), and so is the accentuation of the meaning, its determination and reproduction in the very corporal-object-oriented acting.

The second critically important condition of the IA completeness is the origination of what M. Bakhtin called “the sense of one’s own production activity” [4]. In the already mentioned research of A.V. Zaporoshets and M.I. Lisina, it was shown that the sense of one’s own movement is a necessary condition of appearance of a voluntary action [22]. The sense of one’s own activity appears during the transition of the rhythm of efforts and is thus an evidence of the fact that the transition, “turning point” is really “caught” in the IA — in their difference from the inertia of functioning.

Four statements may form a preliminary conclusion to the review of the interpsychical form of the IA.

1. To the extent, in which the IA is regarded as *Event of a collective action*¹⁸, and not as a natural fact of “communicating”, it presents itself in means of **affirmation of the significance** of the situation of the message. The affirmation of the significance is made during the attempts to understand and reconstruct the **presence**, i.e. *pertinence* of the Intermediary’s message.

2. The attempts to reconstruct the meaning of the psychological tool are the attachment of the functions of the pattern to it. Just *trying and testing* of the pattern beginning is a *necessary* means to adopt the psychological tool. It is necessary because the substance of the pattern taken in its image is the practical assumption of **distinction**, that is of **relation** of actions, and not only pointing to one of them. As a “distinguisher” the pattern requires not copying in imitation, but *testing* of the **transition** from one action to another. Only in such a transition the “natural” *becomes* a kind of “cultural”. The pattern’s stipulation to the transition leads to their gaining the function of “reference point” in the performance of an action.

3. The pattern which was played through and tested as a reference point is an Ideal form that has “found” its place and entered the relationship with the real one.

4. The statement of the exemplarity of the pattern is built as a reverse representation of the meaning of the psychological tool, its accentuation-reinforcement in the material of objective-corporal attempts which are turned to the Intermediary. In such a testing of the transition which is discovered in the pattern the sense of the acting person’s activity is aroused.

In the previous part of the article, IA was analysed as an interpsychic form. We now analyse the evolution of IA — the transition to the intrapsychic form, i.e. the individualization of action.

A child’s discovery, together with an adult, of the limited nature of an action pattern requires an object-oriented view of the limit (as of a puddle, mound, threshold, etc.) — of something where *support* is needed (initially — the adult plays the role of the support). The supports succeed in the cases and in the time when the *processes* of acting are built — the system of “turning points” in action¹⁹. And that is a new situation of the IA. Here the pattern which was earlier mastered as a special *object* opens and acts in the function of support, i.e. of the *means* of action building. The situation of *discovering and revealing* the pattern is transformed to the situation of its systematic *application* under new circumstances.

It is wrong to tacitly assume that developmental processes are “composed” of specific “specimens” of mediation (mastering the potty, spoon and so on, and in some years — addition, multiplication, reading, etc.). Action as a collection of acts is mastered when a child gets the *element* of some change [40]. For example, when it gets the element of movement (walking) at an early age or the element of spoken language at primary school age. The element is a concealed rhythm (form) of formation, and this rhythm is still to be mastered. It is to be mastered with the assumption of the fact that the element energy (e.g. the inertia of the movement while walking or sense “inertias” of the spoken language) often exceeds the current possibilities of a child. Nevertheless, to master them doesn’t mean to cease or to change with anything else. (One can imagine such “learning to walk” which creates a threat of the potential of movement).

Thus, support is a means to include the pattern into the element, to that which is energetically “bigger” than a separate act, formation. Here it should be noted that the idea of support as only of a means to keep the acting process is one-sided. The support while playing the role of a “projection” of the pattern onto the “locality” of the action is *ambivalent* [3, p. 19–21]. And action *remains and is resumed* in it — the moving person *pushes off* the support renewing the energy of movement. In the support the childish “so” and “this” must become a moving set, but not its stop and stupor²⁰. Support is a “start” and start is risky while it presupposes “getting” into the “inertia” of the effort — a necessary condition of moving. Together with the risk entering the activity element is actual, corporal (but not “reflexive”) entering the state of determination, “impulse” which can be felt only at the “start”. So is the beginning, just the *beginning* of that which will be further formed and come out as an intention.

The construction of the system of supports in the element of some activity which “encompasses” the IA

¹⁸ Collective action” is a term of D.B. Elkonin.

¹⁹ According to A.N. Leontiev — the system of operations.

²⁰ According to B.A. Arkhipov’s evidence, such cases are not uncommon in consulting and therapy of a child (more precisely, child-adult) psychophysiological difficulties.

is mastering the form of this element, of its rhythm – resumption of the element as rhythmical. Entering the element of activity reconstruction of a connected *system* of supports – is the involvement into the situation that presupposes *time*²¹. Time is understood as a state (continuing) of transition of efforts and as something further in its contrast to the present and past. The further is represented by the space of *possibilities* of activity – its Field²². The IA's expansion is the *mastering of the Field of activity*.

Just transition from the mastering of a pattern as of an object to constructing supports and establishing in the field of action needs internalization and appearance of the higher mental functions²³. The transition “from the outside inside” can't be made outside the transformation of the means of the performance of the IA²⁴.

In view of the above, it should be pointed out that the individualization of the IA is not an evolutionary, “linear” process. At an early childhood one can observe resistance to the adult's attempts to interfere in the child's action (to sit it on a sledge, to hold it firmly by the hand and so on).

VI

Thus, the individualization of IA presupposes “rooting” of the very act of mediation and its inclusion into the *field* of acting. It is important that this rooting of the very *act* of mediation, the appearance of a certain “work”, *function* of an “internal plan” of the action, but not only of the image or of the thought in themselves. This “work” is connected with the accentuation and re-accentuation of the image of the possible action – distinguishing of key points, “turning points” of its route, i.e. of the supports of acting. So is the structure of the “approximate basis” of action. The field which is assigned by the possibilities of self-building the supports of action, its approximate basis is called “functional field” by P.G. Nezhnov [30].

According to L.S. Vygotsky, the independent fulfillment of some task appears as a “level of current development” of a person²⁵. And the field where the building of an orientation base needs the help of another person is the “zone of proximate development” [10, p. 246–255]. Everything seems to be simple and understandable. However, that is only a seeming simplicity in which the *presence* of the relevant in its transition to the “proximate” is permitted.

In the experiments of A.A. Yegorova, which were cre-

ated in accordance with the “double stimulation” methodology, and in which connection between the appearance of the intention and constructing of means of action was simulated, an interesting precedent of the tested subject's actions was noted [18; 39].

The tested subjects had to distinguish different form of labyrinths guided by their different names. The role of the names was played by signs (combinations of letters of Latin alphabet) in which there were similar and different elements (letters). Moreover, the tested subjects didn't see the form of the labyrinth itself (the labyrinth was put into a closed box), but one put a ball into a box and by its movement inside the labyrinth, i.e. on having *sensed* its trajectory (while manipulating with the box), the tested subjects could imagine the form of the labyrinth and depict their guess²⁶. Tasks (labyrinths) were given according to the principle of the method on the level of aspiration: 4 easy tasks, 4 – of the middle level and 4 – difficult. Ease and difficulty were determined as a measure of intricacy of the labyrinth form, i.e. through the ease and difficulty of imagining its form by the sense of the ball's movement.

We became interested in the means of action, which was often observed with children at the age of 11 and upwards. When a child found difficulty in defining the labyrinth form, it *returned* to easy tasks already accomplished and after working with them proceeded to the task which involved difficulties again. And it did that on its own initiative without any directions on the part of the experimenter. The child acted contrary to the “vector” of intention, its motion in the line (field) of tasks was not linear, but reciprocal. So is the special work on *conversion* of the previous action into the *support* of the further one – *construction* of the relevant. The past *should be converted* into experience, and in this conversion it should be *actualized* as means of the further. So the field of possible action expands²⁷. Its expansion which according to the logics of mediation is understood as construction of supports (means) of action includes *connectedness* of all three guises of time – future, past and present²⁸, – but not only of two – future and present.

The concept of “functional field” introduced by P.G. Nezhnov assigns the phenomenon of a field in the horizon of understanding as the limits of expansion of means of action “out” of the means of action – the connected system of supports, i.e. a kind of *Field of Performance* of the action. The performed analysis is an evidence of the fact that the field of performance which is taken in the IA's *expansion* despite the inertia of the meaning of the word “field” is not some visible appointed

²¹ And again – not reflexively, but actually.

²² As L.S. Vygotsky said, “relevant future field” [13].

²³ Connectedness of image and movement, speech and thought about it that is represented through the intonation of speech, etc.

²⁴ Just this transitions – changes of modes of presence of the IA still can't be simulated in the experimental genesis and in such away, one still can't connect functional genesis and ontogenesis [41].

²⁵ In the context of this article: in the measure of “human development” in which this development of his/her Action is an expansion of the individual form of the IA.

²⁶ See above about the appearance of the internal perception in mediation: one could sense the form of labyrinth only after “bringing feeling to one's hand” [17].

²⁷ The similar, but much more difficult situation was represented in the example of mediation of solving of the tasks “on understanding”.

²⁸ B.A. Arkhipov called this connectedness in expansion of the psychophysiological systems a “triplet” [2; 3].

entity of the course of action, of its “route”. In the image of this field, turning points, curves and bends of the course of action — the places of constructing support — should be marked as *tasks* of its performance. Accents and focusing the course of action are *attribution* of the field of performance, and then the field of performance is the *sense* field, and the performing itself is a “dynamic sense system” [19; 20]²⁹. Only and just in the attribution-accentuation of possible transitions, their “elucidating”, the acting is *present* in “locality”. When activity gets its “place in ...” — that is the appearance of its Field. However, here activity is to act not only in connecting separate “parts”, but as a *single* Action³⁰. So what is this singleness-uniqueness of the action?

VII

Both L.S. Vygotsky in his works of the last period [10; 12] and K. Levin referred not so much to the field of performance, but more to the field of *the beginning and the end of action* — a field as a *Field of intention* [25] when speaking about a Field.

References to the mastering of the support system as on the reduction of the course of action and in such a way leading it to an integrity are insufficient. It is necessary to understand what gets *revealed* during the “removal” of the supports; it is revealed when the course of action is only “meant”. It was already spoken about conflicts around “one’s”, own action and refusal (sometimes even aggressive) to accept the adult’s help. Conflicts around “one’s” toy and “one’s” space can be also observed on a playground, in a sand-pit [40]. I suppose that “struggle” for one’s own activity, one’s space and one’s thing is a symptom of appearance and assertion of action as “*my* action”³¹.

At the age of about two when a child walks already with relative confidence and without assistance, one can observe his peculiar play with adult: the child goes away from the adult expressly at a longer distance as if teasing and provoking him/her. The distance itself is played up as *limits* of the space of the child’s “I can”. It is important that these are the limits of the space of the completed action, but not the limits which are overcome in the course, process of performing the action. The intermediary “goes aside” to the limit of the action which again changed into the act that is turned to him/her as a “disagreement” about the efforts “to be able to do”, about the difference “I can-I can’t”.

The limits *in* action may turn into the limits of the action itself, when the field of action seems to “have come to life” while *meeting* the person acting and acting towards his/her efforts. For example, a sea gets rough, the road becomes greasy, the wood — impassable, etc. In

an outstanding work “Military landscape” K. Levin described such transformations of the field of actions [25]. In a child’s-adult’s life the field of action as a *field of meeting* often appears during meetings with people who hinder children’s aspirations [40]. For example, that is relevant in meetings with somebody intimidating or just with parents who don’t allow the child to do something. Such obstacles are characteristic for the famous “terrible threes” (“crisis of three years”).

The field of meetings is arranged as setting of the *limit* of possibilities and serves as Challenge in reference to the person acting. His/her aspiration is understood and appointed as Response to the challenge, the support and “reference point” of which the very “power”, concentrated energy of the acting person becomes. “My action” transforms into the “I-action” [39, p. 162–166], “I” serves³² as a Source of Activity in which the assignment of the limit and the demand of completion is rethought and performed as Challenge and a new beginning of the action (“deed”). The action is characterized as *personal*, and its embodiment — as image-symbol of “I-power”. Here the action appears as single and sole.

During childhood, a fairy tale is a cultural form of imagining personal action. Actualization of the nature of its intrigue (of the challenge and response to the challenge), i.e. “heroic” action is performed in a full form of a socio-dramatic play [43; 44]. While playing the child masters the very aspiration and intention.

VIII

Summarizing this article, we need to make three important notes, in which we are to reveal some latent assumptions, which happen to be its expansion.

1. When considering the course of the IA’s expansion, one should pay attention to the circumstance that remained “in the shade”. Such a circumstance is the change in the characteristics of the very *course, the process* of development on its various “stages”. While applying the word “development” one means first of all the changes of that *which* is developing. In our case that is the transformation of the IA’s form. But at different stages the IA develops in different ways, it “flows” and “winds” differently. A good source of help is here the work of A.F. Losev [29] in which he, without any special notice, passed to the analytics of expansion and the corresponding form hierarchy of the very *processes* (formation—movement—change—development—action—constructive action—creative act). However, it looks as if such a hierarchy was built in accordance with the logic of ascension from the abstract to an increasingly specific form of the process.

²⁹ The appearance of ideas about sense, field and sense field by Vygotsky and his analysis of them were deeply investigated in the works of K.Yu. Zavershneva [19; 20].

³⁰ As M. Bakhtin said — “the single and the sole Event of Existence” [5].

³¹ It is exactly “my action” that is reduced in the traditional school, where, in spite of all the words about the “value” of independent study, the pupil’s actions are certainly approved only in the mode of their estimation by a teacher, i.e. they “belong” to the teacher and the educational institute

³² One shouldn’t, however, think that the action occurs “out” of “I”. On the contrary, the exposure of “I” appears in the cycle of the IA’s expansion.

For the logic of the article, it is not so important to define the qualities of different processes as the very approach which is important. In fact, IA presupposes transformation of spontaneous *formation* of activity into the processes of *changing* (sensing and trying the transition), and then — of *movement* — the appointing of the reference point. Finally, the “transfer” of the reference point “into” the individual him-/herself later on (at primary school age) presupposes mediation as overcoming of egocentrism and a new constructing of action in which the supports are created in the *process* of solving of the *task*³³.

2. In the article mediation is spoken of as Action. It is necessary to establish the way this term should be understood.

IA is understood as *producing* that is unfolded in time. In the Productive Action there are two connected aspects. Firstly, that is *production* of some article. Production as *overcoming* the already appointed means of performing of the action — overcoming the copying. Secondly, the *turning to the outside* by the created article itself and the formation of the field of *its own* action — “publication [38; 39]. In this turning the very eventivity of the created is tested — the fact if the created is the “turning” of the consideration. And *if* it is, *if*³⁴ it becomes the “reference point” then the proper field of production appears. The Acting becomes the Author, i.e. personality. In the Productive Action the Author is *present* in the very transition, in the interval between the production and exposure.

In the IA, that is understood as producing, three modes of its completeness are connected. First, that is *productivity*. The product of IA is Pattern (Ideal form) as patency of relation (difference). Just here the meaning and significance of the message appear and get affirmed. Second, that is *performance*, where the result is understood not only as achieving something, but as the “delta” of achievements (“today I did better than yesterday”)³⁵. The result of IA is mastering the criteria of the perfec-

tion of action³⁶ by the “mediated”. Third, that is *efficiency*. The effects of the IA are the appearance of the proper field of action of the “mediated” and, in this connection, the beginning of psychological problems.

3. The last question about IA is left unanswered. Thus, why we need mediation as a *transition* to the construction of our own supports and raising our own field of action? The response of L.S. Vygotsky and his followers is clear: mediation is a means of raising Randomness of human activity, i.e. of the real human independence and initiative, the raising of a Free action (V.P. Zinchenko) [23; 24]. And what will be if, following E. Husserl, one “takes out of context” the cultural-value assumptions of the importance and necessity of independence, initiative and freedom? On having performed this procedure we are confronted with a strange question about whether the means of “feeding” is the self-active and free action. Just here is the transition to the human practice limit characteristics needed.

It has been already mentioned that Mediation is the attribution of *transition* and at the same time the reinforcement of the sense of self-activity of other person [39, p. 181–199]. So is the task of the meaning as a psychological tool. This task is fulfilled in cases when the “mediated” himself returns, as if “reflecting back” and reinforces the meaningful content; with his/her corporeity he reinforces, intensifies, accentuates its transitions-rhythms (so as, for example, a firm tread reinforces the harmony of the march). Such exchanges are the intensifiers of the energy of life, “vitality” [1], and this role of intensifiers they can play only in reconstructing of the meaning *with themselves*, i.e. as transitions to the randomness of the action. **The reinforcement and reconstruction of the Energy of Life is the final existential task of Mediation**, and through it — of the **Developmental Act**. Development is the intensifier of the vital capacity of life. Therefore, such is the overall sense of L.S. Vygotsky’s concept.

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³³ It is obvious that in successful cases the processes of ontogenesis don’t end on this point.

³⁴ In these “ifs” a serious risk of producing consists, the riskiness of its testing and play (“stake”).

³⁵ L.S. Vygotsky wrote about that in his article “The Diagnostics of Development and the Pedological Clinic for Difficult Children” [12]. Nowadays, such approach revives under the direction of V.I. Khasan in the gymnasium “Universe” in the city of Krasnoyarsk [37, p. 17–25].

³⁶ In everyday life, it may be turning for a mark, expressive (and often silent) question about completedness).

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