

The “Ambivalence” of Joint Activity as the Basis of the Emergence of Psychological Neoformations: Ways of Developing the Activity Approach

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The article addresses the methodological status of the category of joint activity which, obviously, opens up new possibilities to consider the psychological mechanisms of a person's development. Special attention is paid to the content of the concepts “object of activity” and “subject of activity”, which determine the comprehension of the main characteristics of activity as a process of instrumental transformation of the activity object into its subject, so that the latter embodies the mode of activity used for its creation. The key points of the activity approach by A.N. Leontiev are considered, especially those concerning the sources and conditions of activity development as well as its psychological mechanism which determines the inner dynamics of this contradictory process. These contradictions arise in the course of changes within the subject-tool and communication components of the joint activity, which act, respectively, as the leading forms of transformation of the subject reality and as the means of organizing the interaction of the persons involved into the shared performance of joint activity tasks solution. It is emphasized that the dual nature of activity as a whole including its subject-tool and communication components is fully expressed through a mode of activity, created by person. Contradictions arising in the subject-tool and in communicative component are resolved by their mutually conditioning transformations. This leads to a change in the motivational basis of the subject activity, which determines the development of the subject-tool component of the modes of activity, which, in turn, leads to the development of modes of communicative regulation of the system of relations.

Keywords: object and subject activity, communication, joint activity, mode of activity, modes of actions, development, system of relations, intercourse, motivation, contradictions of activity.

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Introduction

The relationship between the subject activity (practical tool-equipped human activity) and sign-mediated communication is undoubtedly one of the most problematic issues within the methodological paradigm of the cultural-historical psychology. Since the works of Vygotsky its various aspects have been considered in a number of studies here [2; 10; 15; 36] and abroad [14; 40 et al.].

Some of my papers of the recent years also addressed that issue [31; 32; 43]. The key idea discussed in one of the mentioned papers [31] is that the relationship in question should be treated as based on a more general relationship between tool and sign, as it was initially formulated in the work of the same name by L.S. Vygotsky [5, vol. 6, pp. 5–90]. Moreover, in that paper an attempt was made to take another step and demonstrate that it is a different comprehension of the role of

tool and sign in the psychological development of the individual that is behind the discrepancy between the cultural-historical theory of L.S. Vygotsky and the instrumental psychology which he elaborated earlier, but which later became the basis for the development of the theory of activity by A.N. Leontiev – his closest collaborator.

It seems to be the point where the two scholars went separate ways. However, the paper also emphasized the possibility of the new coordination of L.S. Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev's different positions – within the context of elaboration of the category of joint activity.

In this paper I'd like to highlight the possibilities of this category in exploring the specific unity of the tool-equipped activity and communication. To do this one has to come back to the way these concepts were developed within the frames of the Russian psychology.

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While in the cultural-historical theory of L.S. Vygotsky priority was given to tracing the function of the sign in communication and in the development of consciousness [6] A.N. Leontiev sought to uncover the role of tool in changing the patterns, content and psychological mechanisms of human activity functioning and development [19]. Moreover, the sign itself was interpreted by him as a tool and, accordingly, speech communication was considered as a form of tool-mediated activity [20, p. 250]. «... The very idea that the higher psychic functions are mediated by tools, writes A.N. Leontiev, arose from the analysis and along the lines of the structure of mediated labor. The tool, transformed into a sign, retains the purposefulness of the process”. In another work, which is a transcript of his speech on the history of L.S. Vygotsky’s psychological school, he notes: “What is speech? It’s communication, it is, roughly speaking, intercourse, one of the forms of intercourse – communication through meanings, signs. It’s also indirect, it’s also tool-mediated communication” (stressed by me – N.N.) [19, p. 111]. As you know, A.N. Leontiev continued to develop the theory of activity throughout his scientific work, but, unfortunately, his position gradually shifted to the study of motivational and semantic features of activity, which arise in the course of activity as a natural result of subjectifying the need and, according to A.N. Leontiev, turning its subject into a motive so that the person’s attitude to this motive gives a particular personal meaning to the acts of activity.

The activity approach still remains one of the leading in Russian psychology. However, there is the problem of the subject matter of activity which requires some serious psychological analysis for its identification in each particular situation. Yet it has hardly been developed for many years although A.N. Leontiev himself viewed the subject matter of activity as its basic feature [18].

A.N. Leontiev himself noted: “I still use the system of concepts that I once proposed in relation to the analysis of activity and, of course, I would like to develop an attitude, first of all my own, to this system, to revise it again. It seems that this system needs to be developed – which in recent years has not been done in fact. This system of concepts turned out to be frozen, without any movement. ... The concept of activity is not developed in the highest degree” [20, p. 247].

Obviously, one of the reasons for the stagnation in the system of concepts that make up the content of the theory of activity developed by A.N. Leontiev is related to the interpretation of the category “subjectiveness of activity”, which he considered basic in his conception.

Meanwhile, some problems arise that should be discussed in this relation. The first one is connected with the wording used for translation of A.N. Leontiev’s statement cited here:¹

“A basic or, as is sometimes said, a constituting characteristic of activity is its objectiveness. Properly, the concept of its object (Gegenstand) is already implicitly contained in the very concept of activity. The expression “objectless activity” is devoid of any meaning. Activity may seem objectless, but scientific investigation of activity necessarily requires discovering its object [14, p. 37].

Addressing A.N. Leontiev’s reasoning I certainly agree with this idea of, since to analyze the psychological features of activity without fixing its “subjectiveness” means to make this analysis pointless [see 2].

But let’s pay attention to the continuation of the quote:

“Thus, the object of activity is twofold: first, in its independent existence as subordinating to itself and transforming the activity of the subject; second, as an image of the object, as a product of psychological reflection of its properties that is realized as an activity of the subject and cannot exist otherwise [Ibid., p. 37].

Unfortunately, this variant of translation not only seems to provoke a certain misunderstanding of A.N. Leontiev’s position because of its wording but, to a certain extent, strengthens another problem: a methodological error which, obviously, it contains and which will be discussed below. In order to finish with the wording problem it seems necessary to present another variant of the extract translation which in this context is, obviously, more correct:

“<...> the subject of activity is twofold: first, in its independent existence as subordinating to itself and transforming the activity of the subject (the one who acts, the actor); second, as an image of the subject matter, as a product of its properties psychological reflection that is realized as the product of the subject’s activity and cannot exist otherwise” [17, p. 84].

Let us emphasize that A.N. Leontiev himself felt that the use of this term could create misunderstandings, that it is fraught with possible misinterpretation of his thoughts and he tried to eliminate it. Back in the 30s of the last century, developing the terminology of the activity approach, he wrote:

“This term – the subject of activity – however, also has its negative sides, thanks to which it can create misunderstandings. We will discuss one of these negative aspects in advance. It consists in the fact that, <...>, the term subject is ambiguous: in ordinary usage, it always means something positive and real. Here we use the term in its more general, philosophical meaning, (for example, relation as an object of thought; music as an object of

¹ Since the article is addressed to English speaking readers it is necessary to emphasize that the English version of the statement [41, p. 37], quoted by us from the translation of the book by A.N. Leontiev “Activity. Consciousness. Personality”, published in England in 1978, does not correspond to the meaning that A.N. Leontiev had in mind. The reason for this is Russian-English terminological discrepancy between the terms “object” and “subject”. First, it concerns the use of the term “object” in the English translation instead of the term “subject”, as in A.N. Leontiev’s original version of the book. Besides, an adequate understanding of this extract by the English reader is complicated by the fact that there are two terms corresponding to the English term “subject” in the Russian language: in addition to the already mentioned “subject” as a product of activity, the term “subject” can also refer to someone who acts.

musical feeling, etc.); thus, speaking, for example, about the subject of the reading person's activity, we will mean, of course, not the book as a thing, but its comprehended content, etc." [20, pp. 94–95].

Paying tribute to A.N. Leontiev's thoroughness we should proceed to the analysis of content and that probably would help to clarify the terminology problem as well.

It is obvious that in his commentary by the subject of activity A.N. Leontiev does not understand an object as a fragment of objective reality that exists independently of the subject (the one who acts, the actor). To him the subject of activity is represented by some significant for him properties of the object, which appear to him as the result (product) of his activity.

And the example of a book, which A.N. Leontiev gives, only emphasizes this. The book that is already a product of the publishing industry, focused on the reader may, however, be subject of not only reader's activity, but also of other activities, for example, it can be used as a stand for kettle or material for kindling the fireplace in some peculiar situation, etc. Apparently that "comprehended content" of the book — as specified by A.N. Leontiev the subject of reader's activity and its legitimate product is not contained in the book itself. It occurs to the subject (the reader) as a result of his activity. It is created by the reader himself in the process of reading, when working with the text. i.e., it is the result of the reader's activity. If this reader turns out to be a literary critic, then this content will become the subject of his critical activity.

With this interpretation of the subject (as a product of activity), we can hardly agree with A.N. Leontiev that such a subject (product of activity) can exist primarily — "in its independent existence from any activity". It is the objective reality that exists independently of the subject of activity. So not the subjects of activity (its products) — as "subordinating and transforming the activity of the subject" (the actor) but objects — fragments of objective reality can exist independently of the subject (the actor). Any organism (including a person) can interact with an object and turn certain properties and characteristics of this object into the subject of its activity.

Even regardless of such an interaction any fragment of the objective reality theoretically can not be considered as a "subject matter", or as a certain "thing" — a synonym A.N. Leontiev sometimes used instead of the term "subject" in his texts [16, 18 et al.]. On the contrary, it should be considered as an object of theoretical analysis, i.e. as a universe of various and inexhaustible properties and characteristics which in the course of activity can become the subject of activity, because "... the electron is inexhaustible, just like the atom" (V.I. Lenin). However, even in this case, it is necessary to make a methodologically important clarification: it is the objective reality that must be considered inexhaustible, including the fragment of it that in our theoretical activity first appeared as an "atom" ("invisible"), and then as an "electron".

Let us analyze a very typical example in this regard, which A.N. Leontiev gives in order to illustrate the rela-

tions between object and subject of activity in the first edition of "Problems of the development of mind" in 1959. "The essence of marble," wrote A.N. Leontiev, "is really exhausted by its manifold properties, which it reveals in its manifold interactions with other bodies. In relation to an elastic body, it reveals itself as a body that has elasticity, in relation to light rays — as a body that reflects light waves of certain frequencies, in relation to electricity — as a dielectric that has a certain dielectric constant, in relation to acid — as a set of molecules that disintegrate with the release of carbon dioxide, and so on. In the aggregate of these multi-sided manifestations the features of its internal structure reveal themselves as well as the laws of its inherent forms of interaction, in short, — demonstrate what it is" [16, p. 35].

It is obvious that A.N. Leontiev understands that "marble", which has become the subject of his theoretical analysis in the course of various ways of working with it as an object, reveals its different properties. But let us ask ourselves: to whom in the course of our action on this object called marble are these "multi-sided manifestations" inherent? Obviously, to marble, as A.N. Leontiev writes, or to an object that manifests or can manifest its properties in different ways in various possible effects on it that a person performs with it, including those that A.N. Leontiev uses. Unfortunately, A.N. Leontiev does not give an example, but they are quite at hand. For example, the situation when marble is used as a possible facing material or as a material for creating sculptures. It is obvious that all these manifestations belong to the object as a fragment of objective reality.

However, this object acts as marble only when it is used as a material for cladding, i.e. as a stone formed more than 40 million years ago from bottom, mainly limestone deposits and easily processed with certain tools, which made it a material that has important qualities for construction, including for the manufacture of art objects. It is appropriate to recall the phrase once uttered by Michelangelo Buonarroti, which was reproduced by many sculptors after him: "I see an angel in marble and work with a chisel until I release it."

As a dielectric or a body that has elasticity, a variety of objects can act, and not only the one that we call marble. At the same time, marble "properties can have objects that are not marble in the proper sense of the word, i.e., as a historically originated material for construction. And these are not necessarily the objects that we usually call marble because of their "marble" properties. If the name that serves to mark the content, "released" in the course of practical activity with the objects involved into the process is identified with the objects themselves, this causes conceptual confusion of the objects (as fragments of the objective reality existing independently) with their "properties" that are used in the activity processes and due to it have become some subjects of activity in the system of social production.

What is an object in itself, so to speak, independently of us? It is Kant's "thing in itself", which is revealed as a "thing for us" only to the extent of development of social production and, accordingly, "registration" as a human "thing" that sometimes appears only as a re-

sult of public knowledge (and therefore awareness) of the various properties of these “things in themselves” and their “humanization”. Indeed, what is meant is a social in its origin and in its content, although not always conscious knowledge of the object various properties, revealed in the process of working with these objects — the process resulting in making them different “subjects”. So, it is in the guise of different subjects that the object appears, one and the same as it would seem. In fact, the object always appears to us in the form of this or that “subject” only to the extent of disclosure of those properties and characteristics of the object which became somebody’s subject of activity in the strict methodological sense, adopted in scientific activities. In other words, it is what we should reveal in the course of this activity, if our hypothesis about the presence of these previously hidden properties in the object of research is justified.

Consequently, we can “see” the actual “natural” properties of an object only to the extent of their “humanization”, or, what is the same thing, “subjectification”, of their “socialization”, which “made” these hidden from us properties and characteristics of the object as a fragment of objective reality a particular social “object” and, accordingly — a certain social relationship.

Moreover, we can “see” their “objective” characteristics only if and to the extent that each of us already “identified himself” in his individual-public life as a specific social subject of a certain clan or tribe, of the level of development of its psychological capacities, types of interests and occupations, as a specific carrier of human abilities, a system of ideas and concepts specific to this particular society.

And if the ancient Greeks saw in the surrounding “nature” — stones, trees, streams, etc., numerous and quite real for them representatives of the Pantheon of their gods, then the modern Philistine, deprived of this “direct-sensory perception” of mythological reality, just “sees” stones, trees and streams. However, after becoming a geologist, for example, he begins to “see” hundreds of different minerals in the stones. If he becomes a botanist, he will distinguish hundreds of “species” of different plants in the grass common to others, etc., etc.

It is not without reason that some time ago when developing the concept of professional consciousness formation, I emphasized that the basic level of development of professionally significant psychological neoformations of the future professional’s activity is the “subject” level of awareness of reality [30].

That is why each object involved in the most complex system of human relationships that arise in their joint activities, appears with its own completely different, but already “humanized” sides and functions, i.e. in the form of the activity results which thus appear as different “subjects”. We must always keep in mind that any “natural” object, considered as if by itself, in reality — within the framework of human activity — always represents a “sensual” abstraction [3], an “objective mental form”, as E.V. Ilyenkov emphasized after Marx [13] which appears in consciousness as a “quasi-object” (M.K. Mamar-dashvili) [26].

It is not useless in this connection to recall again the words of Karl Marx who noted that in the process of human development as a species, that “direct” sensory reflection, it would seem, naturally turned into a practical-theoretical activity. «... The senses, “wrote Marx,” have become theorists directly in their practice. They are related to a thing for the sake of a thing, but this thing itself is an objective human relation to itself and to man, and vice versa» [28, p. 592].

Therefore, we emphasize once again: any fragment of objective reality — from a methodological point of view being an infinite and inexhaustible universe of various properties and characteristics, which only in tool-mediated and subject-oriented activity acts as a particular “subject matter”, become, as A.N. Leontiev wrote in his time, a kind of “quasi-measurement” of the objects of our activity [18, p. 253].

Bearing in mind numerous data of specific psychological studies, for example, analysis of the diverse phenomena of perception, including the phenomenon of its constancy, the perception of dual images, tables of Rorschach test, originally used to analyze the efficiency of imagination, a variety of illusions and deceptions of vision and hearing, various forms of hallucinations, the effects of the so called procedural knowledge, demonstrating the phenomena of abstract interpretation of the objects of our activity, etc., we must admit, that any object of our activity can appear to us only as a “subject”, i.e. as the result of our previous activity with this object, demonstrating its properties more or less clear to us, since we “discovered” them in the course of our activity with this object.

As noted by K. Marx, “during the labor process labor is constantly moving from the form of activity into the form of existence, from the form of motion into the form of subjectiveness” [29, vol. 23, p. 200]. I would like to emphasize that such treatment of the origin and essence of the “subjectiveness” as the essential feature of human activity is based not only on numerous empirical data from psychological research, but also on the fundamental base of methodological analysis demonstrating that activity is the essence of a person’s attitude to objective reality.

So, even Spinoza wrote that any thing can be described through its various characteristics. But the best definition of a thing is the one that describes the way it occurs: “If a given thing is created, the definition must, as we have said, contain the immediate cause. For example, a circle according to this rule, — Spinoza notes — will need to be defined as follows: it is a figure described by a line, one end of which is fixed, and the other is mobile” [38, p. 352]. It is obvious that Spinoza is referring to a compass by which we can create a circle and which can already be described mathematically as “the geometric place of points equidistant from the center”.

Therefore, a person, due to the socio-historical nature of his activity, always indirectly (regardless of whether consciously, i.e. aware of this, or intuitively, i.e. unconsciously) masters objectively new to him properties and characteristics of some fragments of the objective world.

He performs it through the modes of activity he is mastering or has already mastered and by way of tools that serve for these properties transformation in his activity. This is true even if we are talking about such a primary form of a person's activity as "subject-manipulative game" emerging in the course of joint activity during the first months of a child life. In doing so he relies on concurrently establishing social assessments and attitudes, the "ingrowth" into which since the first days of his life — from the one side — and "cultivation" of which — from the other — [12] make him a specific person.

The problem, however, is that we often do not notice that the very "selection" by the child of a particular "aspect" of the surveyed "object" is the result of his always specialized and specific activity with the actual object as a fragment of the objective reality, due to which the object does not only reveal itself as a potential "carrier" of these new properties, but appears as another "subject" — the curtailed activity or some possible mode of activity with this object.

That is why we should consider so important these initial stages of child's subjective world.

In our minds we, through the pre-existing appropriate modes of activity, not so much "reflect" the objective world as always transform (and, sometimes, distort) the world in accordance with the needs and motives which develop or already have developed in the past making our life and activity a vital-biased process. A person can go beyond his own existing ideas only through his real activity, which transforms (even ideally) the object of this activity into another "subject" and allows, thereby, to transform previous ideas.

From the psychological point of view, an object has no properties before acting with it but in the course of a person's "subject-oriented" actions with regard to this object, it is constituted by the person as the "subject" of his new need.

Therefore, the most important characteristics of any subject are, as Spiniza noted, certain schemes of activity with the object, which allow us to recreate this subject. Thus they appear as a motivationally significant psychological "summary" of our subject-oriented activity with the object. As A. N. Leontiev not once noted, in fact, by means of tools we are "scooping out" from the object those properties and characteristics which, thanks to the emerging and developing needs and the appropriate modes of activity become our motives, i.e. the subjects of our needs [17, pp. 182–205].

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Note that in parallel with the development of the ideas of the activity approach laid down in the domestic psychology by the works of L.S. Vygotsky [5; 6], P.Ya. Galperin [9], A.N. Leontiev [16], S.L. Rubinstein [35], D.B. Elkonin [41] et al. in the 60s–70s of the last century, the problems of communication were also actively studied [1; 23; 24; et al.]. Namely, communication as a process was considered as directly associated with the subject matter of the human practical activity,

which is aimed at the transformation of the reality conditions. Within that context communication was also treated as the internal moment of the activity serving its tasks.

Some authors held that in certain cases communication itself can be considered as a "common type of specific human activity" [27, p. 12], the subject of which is another person, and accordingly, the task of which is to build and maintain relationships with other people, or, as noted by A.K. Markova, "this is the activity focused on solving the problems of social communication. Social communication includes contact with an individual and interaction with society, direct practical cooperation and exchange of ideal values, etc." (Ibid, p. 12). It is obvious that in this case, the subject activity itself is viewed only as a moment of communication, serving its purposes.

Thus, depending on the context of the study and the interests of its authors, subject activity and communication were interpreted primarily as different forms of human activity, sometimes organically complementary [2; 36; 39] or, on the contrary, excluding each other, since the former was usually seen as the impact of the subject (subjects) on objects, and the latter — as interaction of subjects with one another [25]. It seems that today this is the most common view on the relationship between the subject activity and communication in their various forms, which actually persists in both domestic and foreign psychology [14; 40].

However, some authors believe that communication cannot be considered as an activity at all. For example, S.D. Smirnov, one of A.N. Leontiev's closest collaborators, who made a significant contribution to understanding the mechanisms of perceptive activity, in the 2000s directly opposed the concepts of activity and communication, pointing out that "the idea of asymmetry (S-O) — the directed impact of the active entity on the object he transforms — was laid in the concept of activity from the very beginning" [37]. In his opinion, the difference between activity and communication is the difference "between two fundamentally different types of reality (emphasized by me — N.N.): the mediated relationship between people and direct communication face to face. The latter is particular for its high intensity of "motivation birth" processes and can be characterized by almost complete not expressed purpose. It is such communication that is sometimes called personal, deep, authentic, productive, etc." [Ibid.].

It seems, however, that S.D. Smirnov, "diluting" activity and communication in such a radical way, did not see that, in fact, he contrasts what he treats as different points but what are, rather, different aspects of the developing joint activity process unified at its core. What for S.D. Smirnov appears as the central feature of communication is a very important, but just one of the moments of the process where the motivation of the activity is formed, namely the stage of the "subjectification" of the newly born need. So it appears to be naturally associated with the occurrence of the new element in the existing motivation structure of the personality fraught, sometimes, with restructuring of the whole motivation

structure which as a rule, is acutely experienced by the subject.

A.S. Pushkin as a great connoisseur of human souls described similar experiences in the poetic novel “Eugene Onegin”. I can’t help but mention a fragment of Tatyana’s letter to Onegin, in which Tatiana writes:

“... You’d scarce arrived, I reckoned
to know you, swooned, and in a second
all in a blaze, I said: it’s he!” [34].

For a psychologist who is particularly familiar with the works of Konrad Lorenz, it is obvious that here Pushkin describes the phenomenon of imprinting, accompanied by an “intense” experience of objectively occurring “subjectification” of the existing need. But, as A.N. Leontiev emphasized, the scientific, actually psychological understanding of such experiences requires an analysis of the activity within which this personally significant experience is born, testifying to the formation of the motivational basis of the newly emerging activity. However, the process of “subjectifying” the need is only a psychological condition for the deployment of activity as a process of transformation of its existing conditions that promote or, on the contrary, prevent the achievement of the desired. The plot of the novel “Eugene Onegin” shows that the actions through which its characters tried to implement their motives were inadequate to the circumstances. To show “the truth of the passions in the proposed circumstances” (A.S. Pushkin) is the task of the poet as an artist. But from a scientific-psychological point of view, the direction of such actions, of course, is determined by previously emerged, sometimes unconscious motives of the subject.

However, their achievement and, consequently, the satisfaction of related needs, is always carried out under certain conditions, which, in fact, make the psychological basis of birth of the goals more or less adequate to these motives and of the appropriate actions responsible for their implementation. The performance of the actions involves modes of actions or, in the words of A.N. Leontiev, operations, that are specific for the given conditions. Through them the activity and, respectively, the subsequent actions that make up its subject matter are realized [20, pp. 253–259].

Therefore, A.N. Leontiev as a researcher of the laws of personal development has repeatedly emphasized that the main psychological mechanism for the birth of motivation, characteristic of human activity, is the “shift of motive to goal”. What is meant here is the moment when the specific goals of actions “subjectifying” in the form of the respective ways and means of satisfaction of the needs that brought to life these goals become motivationally significant and, accordingly, turn into new motives. As A.N. Leontiev wrote, “personality formation involves the development of the process of goals formation and, accordingly, the development of the subject’s actions. Actions, becoming more and more rich, seem to outgrow the circle of activities that they implement, and come into conflict with the motives that gave rise to them. <...>

The internal driving forces of this process lie in the initial duality of the subject’s connections with the world, in their dual mediation — by the object activity

and by communication (emphasized by me — N.N.). Its deployment generates not only a duality of motivation for actions, but also their subordination, depending on the objective relations that open up to the subject, who enters into them” [18, pp. 210–211].

It is obvious that the emergence of new forms of joint activity and their individualization, associated with a constantly developing motivational structure of activity, requires from the subject to search for means to achieve these newly emerging motives and master the ways of their implementation, i.e., updating and/or creating new appropriate actions. At the same time, the former modes of activity, turning into an operational fund of activity, continue to be its necessary organic components. Unfortunately, this is systematically ignored in many studies, seemingly based on the activity approach.

In this connection A.N. Leontiev warned against some possible disregard of one of his fundamental ideas that laid the basis of the activity approach. According to him, activity, action and operation do not represent certain separates that can be considered by themselves, so to speak, outside the system of activity. “If you subtract mentally from activities actions, operations or from the operations — functions,” Leontiev said, “you will get a hole from a bagel. It’s not separate, it’s not objects, you can’t say that the activity is made of -... Activity can involve a single action. It then does not add up to anything, it is this action, the action can include a single operation. It is this operation and at the same time action. In short, they can not be considered as some bricks, only different. It’s not going to work out that way.” [20, p. 253].

Of course, while recognizing after A.N. Leontiev the inseparability of the structural elements of the activity, through which its motives and goals are realized, we can note that the system of relations between the participants of this joint activity in the context of which its tasks are solved remains outside the focus of the activity approach studies.

In this connection it is possible to partially recognize a certain correctness of the point of view of S.D. Smirnov, who mechanistically separated “activity” and “communication”. It is obviously connected with the fact that in the framework of the classical version of the activity approach researchers did not fix the dual nature of tasks that are solved in the process of activity at different stages of its development. Moreover, the ambivalent and therefore contradictory nature of the activity itself should be highlighted as the one that determines the trajectory of human ontogenetic development.

As K. Marx wrote at the time, “the individual is a social being. Therefore, every manifestation of his life — even if it does not appear in the direct form of a collective manifestation of life performed jointly with others — is a manifestation and affirmation of social life” [28, p. 590].

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A.L. Wenger rightly notes, “... the concept of joint activity was on the periphery of the interests of most researchers. Meanwhile, in our opinion, it is still the most

important tool for studying child development [4, p. 18]. In this context referring to L.S. Vygotsky he underlines the significance of the child's relationships problem: "... the central factor, from the point of view of L.S. Vygotsky, remained "overboard" – the child's relationship with society (embodied, first of all, in his relations with close adults)» [Ibid. p. 17].

Unfortunately, researchers often fix such relationships in a superficial empirical form, considering them only as a self-evident condition for any activity, thereby ignoring their psychological essence and role as the way of communicative regulation and self-regulation of activity in the subsystem of relations between people.

In fact, naturally "maturing" in joint activity, a person's relations to others cause those deep psychological changes in the system of joint activity, which, in turn, determine the person's capabilities and success in implementing subject-oriented transformations in the of activity conditions.

Thus, the basis for a serious theoretical elaboration of the relationship between subject activity and communication is the idea of joint activity as having a "dual" or even ambivalent essence. In other words, joint activity as a process of instrumental transformation of the objectively given conditions of activity is always carried out in a certain social situation of human development since a human being is a subject of numerous connections and relationships with other people. It is these relationships that not only mediate various forms and types of social interaction but constitute its essence.

Obviously, such an approach should be the basis for a new formulation of a number of fundamental problems of psychology. The first in this context is the problem of internal contradictions in the process of the developing joint activity. These contradictions determine both the nature and content of a subject psychological capabilities that are developing within the frames of joint activity. The joint activity sets the system of the subject relations, within which the subject learns and then creates the necessary modes of tool-mediated and therefore always practically-oriented activity, implementing them into a subsystem of communication with others, which is to ensure the success of this interaction.

Meanwhile, as A.N. Leontiev rightly emphasized, the very process of implementing the modes of activity that the subject masters would cause natural changes in the system of relations, the implementation of which can be facilitated or, on the contrary, hindered by other participants in joint activity, sometimes without even knowing about their participation. Thus, there appear the changes in the nature of the subject's interaction with objective conditions presented in one way or another in his subjective world, including the system of his relations with other people. And as shown by the analysis conducted by M.K. Mamardashvili, the content of this subjective world is not always adequate to the objective situation of participants in this joint activity [26].

From this point of view, it is obvious that when conducting research that is consciously based on the activity approach, it should always be about analyzing the interrelations of two subsystems of joint activity, which,

as shown in our works [31; 32], not only determine each other, but through each other realize their potential in the system of joint activity. As the analysis shows, changes in a particular subsystem generate objective contradictions in the system of activity, the strengthening of which, under certain conditions, naturally gives rise to development crises. The process of their resolution triggers the main psychological mechanism of the development of the subject of activity [32].

In fact, these contradictions are a constantly arising internal conflict between the different ways of regulating the real interaction of subjects of joint activity in solving problems of changing the conditions of their real existence in connection with the emergence of new needs. As noted by Karl Marx, "... the fact is that the satisfied first need, the action of satisfaction and the already acquired instrument of satisfaction lead to new needs, and this generation of new needs is the first historical act" [29, vol. 3, p. 27].

The success of these actions is conditioned by the degree and quality of satisfaction of the subject needs through subject-oriented actions aimed at achieving motives that meet these needs. However, in the activity system, this success depends on the measure of coordination between the participants in the joint activity concerning the modes of the actions used by them. It is obvious that the coordination of efforts in solving these vital tasks of practical transformation of the conditions of activity by the subjects of joint activity is carried out in their communication subsystem. So, they use various means of communication [7] thus achieving the goals of the joint activity organizing and regulation.

Thus, we can take a different look at the problem of the relationship between communication and practically oriented and tool-equipped subject activity. Communication as a way of joint activity organizing and regulating is not only crucial for ensuring the productivity of subject activity but it also provides for the development of consciousness. The human consciousness is viewed here as a specific form of coordination of the very process of human capabilities psychological development and also as the means of the person's activity self-regulation. These functions implementation ensures systemic and semantic structure of the consciousness, to understand which is sought by L.S. Vygotsky [5, vol. 1, pp. 132–148].

In this respect it is necessary to support P.Ya. Galperin's attempt to analyze the process and results of anthropogenesis, the consideration of which, in his opinion, is of paramount importance for the development of scientific psychology. He noted: "Another, also functional side of this process (anthropogenesis – N.N.) is that there is a division of mental life into relatively independent forms, which we usually distinguish as perception, memory, imagination, thinking, feelings, needs, will, etc. Consciousness itself stands out as a special element, as a special form of relations to other people and to itself, following the pattern of how other people relate to themselves and to me. All this happens in the process of the formation of human society and the formation of people themselves" [8, p. 135].

However, in the course of ontogenesis this process is also carried out in a reduced form in relation to anthropogenesis. Of course, I do not mean the version of the biogenetic law that was overcome in psychology at the beginning of the last century. The process of psychological development of the child is not a process of deployment of certain potencies and intentions that the child carries in his body. The whole pathos of cultural-historical psychology and the activity approach to comprehending the laws of development of each person entering this world could be defined as follows: child development is the process of his entering into a system of joint activities, the specific content of which becomes his psychology.

However, the psychological capabilities of the child are developing only to the extent of its own activeness, which always turns into some form of subject activity ready to meet the tasks arising in the course of development. This activity is always undertaken within the changing social circle which expands with the development of the child and in which some new requirements in relation to the child naturally emerge. They mostly respond to the changing possibilities of the child participation in joint activity.

Due to this, each child is constantly forced to actively develop its own forms of behavior, thereby "appropriating" the necessary forms and modes of joint activity, always to the extent of the available level of psychological capabilities for interaction with adults and further on. This is what naturally generates certain internal contradictions in the development process of each individual, the resolution of which is the main source of this development with all its pros and cons [32].

A newly born infant who screams his entry into the adult world must go through all the necessary stages of finding his human destiny. And the initial stage of this development can only take place in such a form of joint activity, in which this "co-operation" manifests itself in such a way that the child acts through the actions of the mother. The importance of this basic form of joint activity D.B. Elkonin noted in his scientific diaries: "26.4.1970. ... the separation of the Self from the "Great-we" is associated with a radical change in the structure of the child's activity. At the earliest stages, this is, in the true sense of the word, a joint activity in which the adult acts together with the child. There is no child's independent actions at all, since the adult acts with the help of child's hands (only gradually some links produced by the child itself are isolated)..." [41, pp. 500–501].

These initial forms of joint activity only make the basis. With its further differentiation those individual forms of joint activity occur, in which the psychological uniqueness of the originating personality realizes itself. Moreover, their further evolution sets a specific trajectory for the child establishing as a subject of a certain social community. As Marx noted, man in the process of activity "...produces himself in all his integrity, he does not seek to remain something finally established, but is in the absolute movement of becoming" [29, vol. 46, part 1, p. 476].

Conclusion

Thus, the duality of joint activity is a product of a person development within the system of social reproduction of his life activity. It is an essential, even if full of contradictions, feature of his existence as a social individual, which in fact determines the emergence, development and subject differentiation of all psychological neoformations that characterize a person as a representative of a particular community. This affiliation, accordingly, determines the specifics of the person's participation in joint activity with others, always carried out in the system of his already established or establishing relations to certain social groups. They set the context in which this activity takes place, and which in one way or another implements the person's relations with the world as a whole.

However, when studying the psychological profile of a person as affected by his involvement into the joint activity, this duality sometimes seems to be eliminated. In this case, the relevant aspects of activity are considered abstractly, in their metaphysical isolation from each other. Somehow this hinders a deeper understanding of the fundamental fact that the "subject" aspect of joint activity, expressing the matter of the person's psychological capabilities to really and/or ideally transform the image of reality, also determines the content of the activity "communicative" aspect. The latter, manifested through a system of specialized communicative acts, serves as a necessary condition for the implementation of the "subject" aspect of activity by the person while the potential of the communicative aspect is realized through the "subject" transformations of the objective reality in the system of joint activity.

There is a natural differentiation of these aspects in the process of the joint activity development, however, each of them "holds" this duality. As a result, this leads to the deepening of the contradictions that are inherent in each of these aspects of the unified process; their resolution is carried out in the course of development of joint activity, as the basis of the person's development.

In this regard, a researcher of a particular person's activity process has to consider the contradictory unity of a "subject" action and communicative act as mutually determining moments (aspects) of joint activity. Both naturally emerge since the first moments of each individual's life due to his initial "immersion" in the system of social relations. It is these mutually affecting aspects of joint activity that determine the relationship of an individual with the conditions and factors of the objective reality which in the process of the activity development become its subjects and means.

Thus, only disclosing the psychological laws that underlie the developing child-adults system of relations, from the one side, and various "subject" actions the child is mastering — from the other, one can understand the psychological "mechanisms" affecting the entire system of "subject" awareness of both the conditions and modes of these actions in the course of activity since their psychological transformation depends on the whole context of the joint activity. From the other side, only by studying

the specific various forms of the “communicative” awareness of the goals, conditions and modes of subject activity which takes place in acts of communication one can reasonably understand the psychological patterns of development of these modes in the context of joint activity.

It seems that this view, based on the dual nature of joint activity opens up the possibility of developing the activity approach. Here we are talking about a certain reinterpretation of a number of provisions that have received the status of axioms in Russian psychology. Obviously, there is a need of rethinking certain moments of L.S. Vygotsky's theoretical vision of cultural and his-

torical psychology with its main focus on the communicative aspect of joint activity, which determines the development of consciousness as a system of regulation of human activity. It seems that the potential of this outstanding theory may not be fully developed and it should be interpreted in a new way.

Just as important is the possibility of the new understanding of many provisions of A.N. Leontiev's theory of activity which reveals the role of “subject” activity in the process of formation of the main psychological neoformations that characterize human development.

Obviously, we are only at the beginning of the road.

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«Двойственность» совместной деятельности как основа становления психологических новообразований: пути развития деятельностного подхода

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Статья посвящена анализу методологического статуса категории совместной деятельности и ее роли в раскрытии психологических механизмов развития человека. Особое внимание уделяется сохранению терминов «объект деятельности» и «предмет деятельности», которое определяет понимание основных характеристик деятельности как процесса орудийного преобразования объекта деятельности в ее предмет, воплощающего собой осуществленный способ деятельности. Ключевыми пунктами анализа деятельностного подхода А.Н. Леонтьева являются положения об источниках, условиях и психологических механизмах деятельности, определяющих внутреннюю динамику развития ее про-

тиворечий. Эти противоречия возникают в ходе изменений в предметно-орудийной и коммуникативной составляющих совместной деятельности, которые выступают, соответственно, ведущими формами преобразования предметной действительности и средствами организации взаимодействия субъектов в рамках решения задач совместной деятельности. Подчеркивается, что именно через способ деятельности выражается ее двойственный характер как системы, включающей предметно-орудийную и коммуникативную составляющие. Противоречия, вызревающие в этих составляющих деятельности, разрешаются путем их взаимообуславливающих трансформаций, что ведет к изменению мотивационной основы деятельности, определяющей развитие предметно-орудийных способов действий, которое, в свою очередь, приводит к развитию способов коммуникативной регуляции системы отношений.

Ключевые слова: совместная деятельность, объект и предмет деятельности, коммуникация, способ деятельности, способы действия, развитие, система отношений, общение, мотивация, противоречия деятельности.

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