ACTIVITY:

THE THEORY, METHODOLOGY AND PROBLEMS

EDITED BY: V. P. LEKTORSKY

ISSUES IN

Contemporary Soviet Psychology

New from Paul M. Deutsch Press

ACTIVITY:
The Theory, Methodology and Problems
Edited by: V.P. Lektorsky

Paul M. Deutsch Press, Inc. is pleased to announce the publication in English of this important new volume, containing contributions from 32 leading Soviet specialists. It challenges the assumptions prevalent in a number of books currently being published on the subject of activity theory and offers a fresh and rigorous debate.

This book is devoted to the discussion of the actual meaning of the problem of activity and the activity-based approach, and their real potential and limitations. Because we seem to be experiencing a kind of activity boom, V.P. Lektorsky states in his "Invitation to Discussion" in the book: "A large number of books and articles dealing with problems of dialectical and historical materialism, methodology of scientific knowledge, sociology, the theory of culture, psychology, etc. are being published. These publications stress the importance of the principle of activity, the necessity of an activity based approach and sometimes even proclaim the existence of a 'universal theory of activity'. However, a closer look at these publications is disappointing. The fact is that discussions about activity do not always open up new horizons in our understanding and are at times reduced to simply activity-related terminology to already well-known ideas."

This new book seeks to reverse this trend, and to take discussion of activity theory to new heights. It is structured in the dialectical style: every participant in the discussion is given three opportunities to contribute - first, to explain his own position on the issues under discussion, then to criticize the viewpoints of others, and finally, to respond to criticism of his own position.

ACTIVITY

Theories, Methodology & Problems

Paul M. Deutsch Press

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ACTIVITY
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Edited by V.A. Lektorsky

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Note to the American Reader

This volume presents a comprehensive review of alternative philosophical and psychological Soviet interpretations of the concept of activity. More than that, it also offers the reader an opportunity to observe and engage in a multi-voiced debate which evolves through three escalating steps of argumentation. In the first section, each of the ten authors presents his view on the topic. In the second section, the authors comment on and criticize each others' views. In the third section, they respond to the comments and criticisms. Although this form of a book is not new in the Soviet Union, to western readers it is a novel and unique expose of current Soviet intellectual discussion.

The concept of activity is very well suited for this kind of elaboration through debate. In recent years, this concept has gained increasing attention in Soviet social sciences, humanities and philosophy. The works of the prominent psychologist A.N. Leont'ev (1903-1979)[1] have played a pathbreaking role in this development. The concept of activity itself calls attention to the role of the subject in the creative shaping of history. Psychologists and philosophers who built their theories and research on this concept were not always looked upon favorably by those in power. However, in the present conditions of glasnost and perestroika, the subjective factor in general and creativity in particular have rapidly become central issues of concern, not only in academic theorizing but also in practical policy making.

The concept of activity is a theoretical bridge between the individual and the society, between the constructive potential of the human subject and the historically accumulated social constraints and cultural meanings mediating everything the subject does. The roots of this concept can be located in classical German philosophy and in the writings of Marx, especially in his Thesis on Feuerbach. These roots found a new fruition in the 1920's and 1930's in L.S. Vygotsky's theory of the cultural formation of the mind.[2] While Vygotsky has later become a household name in psychology all over the world, the continuation of his work by Leont'ev and others on the basis of the concept of activity is still relatively little known outside the Soviet Union. This is partly due to language barrier and lack of literature available in English[3], partly to the fact that the concept of activity is not anymore merely a philosophical idea. The cross-disciplinary

dimensions and philosophical foundations of this concept make it relatively difficult for western researchers often more comfortable with ideas that can be used without much philosophical scrutiny and safely confined within a particular discipline.

In spite of these limitations, there has been an international surge of interest in the theory of activity during the 1980's and 1990's. Two large international congresses for research on activity theory have been held (in 1986 in Berlin and in 1990 in Lahti, Finland).[4] An international scientific society and a journal[5] have been founded to advance research and theorizing based on the concept of activity. The third international congress on activity theory will be held in the Soviet Union in 1994.

The present volume focuses on conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues. The large pool of empirical and experimental research findings accumulated in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in psychology, education, sociology, linguistics and other specific disciplines on the basis of activity approach is not systematically reviewed in this volume. The contributions of this volume should be read as attempts to clarify and strengthen the conceptual foundations of ongoing and future concrete research. They should also be read as an invitation to expand the discussion so that the concept of activity may be compared and confronted with other related theories, such as the symbolic interactionism of G.H. Mead, the pragmatism of Peirce and Dewey, the language games of Wittgenstein, or the self-organizing systems of Prigogine, not to mention various current psychological and sociological theories of action, structuration and practice.

San Diego and Moscow, October 1990
Yrjö Engeström
V.A. Lektorsky

1. See A.N. Leont'ev. Activity, Consciousness, and Personality. Englewood Cliffs (Prentice-Hall), 1978; and A.N. Leonte'v. Problems of the Development of the Mind. Moscow (Progress Publishers), 1981.
2. L.S. Vygotsky. Mind in Society. Cambridge (Harvard University Press), 1978. See also J.V. Wertsch. Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind. Cambridge (Harvard University Press), 1985.
3. Among the few available basic texts, the following two deserve special mention: J.V. Wertsch (Ed.). The Concept of Activity in Soviet Psychology. Armonk (M.E. Sharpe), 1981; and V.A. Lektorsky. Subject, Object, Cognition. Moscow (Progress Publishers), 1984.
4. See M. Hildebrand-Nilshon and Georg Rückriem (Eds.). Proceedings of the 1st International Congress on Activity Theory. Volumes 1-5. Berlin (System Druck), 1989; and Y. Engeström and R-L. Punamäki (Eds.). Perspectives on Activity Theory: Papers Presented at the 2nd International Congress on Activity Theory (in press).
5. The Multidisciplinary Newsletter on Activity Theory was published by the International Standing Conference on Research on Activity Theory (ISCRAT) from 1987 to 1990. From 1991 on, it is replaced by the international journal Activity Theory.

An Invitation to Discussion

By V.P. Lektorsky

Over the last decade, the problem of activity has attracted the attention of people in the fields of social sciences and the natural sciences relating to man. There are a number of possible reasons for this. First of all, I would like to point out that the very place of activity in modern life has changed and continues to change. The continuous social development of our society is becoming an object of a conscious purposeful and scientific activity which among other things is aimed at restructuring it. One of the major consequences of the scientific and technological revolution is that the relationship between basic and applied sciences has been undergoing far-reaching changes. These are largely connected with the changing nature of scientific research as a whole and the development of the projection-construction function of science. The development of society, science and culture not only gives rise to new kinds of activity but also allows the question of their conscious projection to be raised. To study these wide-ranging issues (as well as the question of the historical development of types and forms of activity) is an extremely important task which has not yet been fully dealt with in our investigations.

However, there is also another side to the problem of activity which is very relevant today. E. Yudin, a prominent Soviet philosopher, pointed out in his time that it is important to distinguish between activity as an object of research and activity as an explanatory principle. A principle may claim to have an explanatory role only if it serves as a basis for the development of one or more theories capable of unravelling and explaining a sufficiently large number of facts which hitherto seemed completely disconnected. If this cannot be achieved, then it should be described not as an explanatory principle but merely as a concept that only fixes on one particular (even if important) side of reality. Activity as an explanatory principle is currently the subject of a very heated debate in our literature.

The impression is that we are witnessing a kind of "activity" boom. A large number of books and articles dealing with problems of dialectical and historical materialism, methodology of scientific knowledge, sociology, the theory of culture, psychology, etc. are being published. These publications stress the importance of the principle of activity, the

necessity of an activity-based approach and sometimes even proclaim the existence of a "universal theory of activity." However, a closer look at certain works specifically devoted to problems of activity is disappointing. The fact is that discussions about activity do not always open up new horizons in our understanding of the phenomena being studied and are at times reduced to simply applying "activity" -related terminology to already well known ideas and notions.

What is the actual meaning of the problem of activity and the activity-based approach, and what are their true potential and limitations?

This book is devoted to the discussion and argument of all these questions. It is structured in the same way as Dialectical Contradiction and The Dialectics of the Negation of Negation published by Politizdat Publishers in the same series several years ago. Every participant in the discussion is given three opportunities to contribute: first, to explain his own position on the issues under discussion, then to make criticisms of other people's viewpoints and, lastly, to respond to criticisms of his own position. After the discussion I will make some concluding remarks.

So, the discussion begins.

V.P. Lektorsky

Part I

Activity as a Problem

Chapter 1

THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVITY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORY: THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED

By V.S. Shvyrev

The essence of the so-called activity approach to the world of man (regardless of the way this approach is interpreted) consists of course not in emphasizing the trivial idea that man is active in this world, but rather in analysing the specifically human ways of transforming actual conditions. It is due to the possibility of such analysis that, as E.G. Yudin correctly pointed out, "the concept of activity plays a key and methodologically central role in contemporary, especially humanitarian, knowledge, for it helps to provide us with a universal picture of the human world."[1] In other words, the development of a theoretical concept of activity presupposes some kind of research program aimed at revealing the essence of activity as being a kind of activeness; and it is only in this form that the concept of activity may act as a prerequisite for investigating "the world of man" with all its specific features.

When we elaborate on the theoretical concept of activity, we approach it from various directions: from the "top," i.e. philosophically by which we seek to come up with a more general definition of activity, or from the individual social sciences and arts, which work on their own definitions of activity, its nature and structure. In the Soviet Union, for instance, the widely known explanation of theoretical concepts of activity in psychology is linked to the name of a prominent Soviet psychologist A.N. Leont'ev.

It should be emphasised that social sciences such as sociology, psychology, ethics, aesthetics, pedagogics and the methodology of science are, on the one hand, simply forced to rely on certain concepts of activity when discussing their respective objects of investigation. On the other hand, all these sciences, while analysing the type of activity which happens to be their object, do not, however, consider activity in its "pure" form. They proceed from certain isolated structures in which activity is embodied in each case. Of course the contribution they make to the study of these structures is important for the understanding of activity in its universality. Notwithstanding, this universality still re-

mains beyond the limits of their study.

The basic method of understanding activity is connected with the appearance of a certain type of attitude to the world and of a certain way of living in the world which constitutes the essence of activity. And it is only by proceeding from this understanding that we can discover the theoretical foundation of the inherent unity of all the separate kinds of activity of human social groups and individuals to which the term "activity" is applied. Naturally, the basic content of the theoretical concept of "activity" cannot but have a philosophical character; it cannot be understood or explained outside a broad philosophical or conceptual context. It goes without saying that this philosophical approach to activity leaves a large number of questions unanswered, questions concerning the making of activity into reality in the form of a certain way of being in the world and in true socio-cultural historical reality, and concerning the analysis of various forms and kinds of activity, their structures, etc. However, without a clear understanding of this fundamental point concerning the content of the concept of "activity" we shall be unable to turn the use of this concept within the confines of individual social and human sciences into a subject of theoretical reflection.

Those who view activity as a certain type of attitude to reality stress above all that, in contrast to biologically predetermined behaviour in the animal world, activity in human society is determined by socio-cultural programs developed throughout history. It is the presence of these programs that makes it possible to speak in terms of a transition from behaviour as a system of actions aimed at maintaining biological existence within the limits of the "genetically conditioned ecological niche" to activity as a specifically human form of "active attitude towards the surrounding world," whose content consists in "changing and transforming this world with a certain goal in mind by adopting and developing the available forms of culture."[2] While accepting that activity, in contrast to behaviour, is oriented towards historical socio-cultural programs, one should at the same time stress the importance of the development of forms of culture (as mentioned in the above quote) as programs of activity. The changing and transforming of actual reality on the basis of a culturally predetermined norm adopted as a program of activity is nowhere near the limit of activity's possibilities. These features are enough to provide the "lower limit" of activity which distinguishes it from animal behaviour. But they are not enough if we want to characterise it by the "upper limits" of its possibilities. In essence, the changing and transforming of reality with a certain goal in mind on the basis of a culturally predetermined norm, as activity is sometimes defined, is structurally analogous to the type of activeness which also characterises behaviour in the animal world. The only difference is that at the root of this activeness is not a biological but a culturally predetermined program. This is, of course, a substantial difference which allows us to relate this sort of activeness to the world of

culture and socio-cultural activity. But do these kinds of opportunities fully account for all the specific aspects of activity?

In order to give what is possibly a more precise initial definition of activity it is very important that the "lower limit" separating activity from biologically conditioned behaviour should not put any restrictions on the characteristics of the possibilities available to activity along its "upper limit." It is important that both these limits should be presented as "two sides of the same coin" in the understanding of activity. activity is an activeness which, by its very nature, is capable of unlimited revision and improvement of its basic programs, of "reprogramming" if you like, free from any external restraints. In this sense activity is basically an open system capable of unlimited self-development within the framework of the universal which embraces it. Of course, biological behavioural programs also improve and develop themselves during the natural evolution of organisms. But their development is geared to a better adaptation to a particular "ecological niche." The possibilities of human activity are, in their turn, also limited, historically "finite" and relative. But the limitations of the programs forming the basis of human activity are fundamentally different from the limitations of the species programs of animal behaviour. Humans in their activity go beyond the narrow bounds of adaptation to the environment. As they improve and develop still further the horizons of their activity, humans are basically capable of taking control of any "space" in the world, any "sector" of existence.

Herein is the essence of the universality of man's relationship to the world that Karl Marx wrote about in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* where he stressed that an animal "produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. . . An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object."[3]

The basic difference between goal-oriented vital behaviour and the possibilities of human activity was once demonstrated by L.S. Vygotsky in an analysis of the classical "Boridan ass" model. Vygotsky noted that in contrast to an animal "man himself creates stimuli that determine his reactions and uses them as a means of mastering the processes of his own behaviour. Man himself determines his behaviour with the help of manmade stimuli-means."[4] In this analysis Vygotsky considered drawing lots to be this man-made stimulus. The determination of activity by drawing lots is not, of course, the only or the best way to set targets freely. Vygotsky indicated later on that "a decision made by drawing lots is not the highest manifestation of will power"[5]; however, his logic in the analysis of the contra-position of behaviour and activity, in our view, gets right to the heart of the problem.

While biologically oriented behaviour is goal-directed and goal-

oriented, activity allows the possibility of a free **goal setting,** without, of course, excluding goal orientation.

The idea of free goal setting is not, of course, aimed at opposing human activity to objective laws. It seeks to approach activity as the type of relationship to the world which permits the pressure of any external factors and conditions to be overcome by transforming the immediate reality. In contrast to goal-oriented behaviour, activity as free goal setting has no limitations in this respect that are impossible to overcome.

This approach to activity does not limit itself to any kind of projection of subject onto object or to subject-object relations in which the subject's activity is linked only with the transformation of the object in accordance with its programs, goals and sets. The process of defying the predetermined nature of a given situation presupposes, of course, that the subject also has the ability to change, develop and educate himself. The "world" is not only the total of exterior objects but also a world of human subjectivity. The essential openness of the basic programs and the capacity for unlimited reprogramming that I have indicated above naturally presuppose the openness of the position of the subject of activity.

All this is vitally important for solving the problem of activity's universality. Everyone agrees that activity is a specifically human form of activeness. But to what extent is it universal? Does this form of activeness fully account for all the specific features of man's relationship with the world? One should acknowledge the fact (without attempting to assess it yet) that philosophical, psychological and sociological literature currently approaches the universal nature of the category of activity very cautiously, and some of the staunch supporters of the so-called activity approach have reappraised certain values in this respect.

There are at least three things which, in our view, have caused this, and it would be imprudent to ignore them.

The first of these is the narrow treatment of the category of activity in conceptual-theoretical terms proper, that is as a projection of the subject upon the object and as simply changes in the object in accordance with a given system of goals and programs. It is evident that if we understand activity in this way it cannot serve as the basis of human existence in terms either of society or of individual existence. There is no doubt that "the essence of man is significantly richer, more varied and complex than just the system of his activity"[6] and, if understood in this manner, the category of activity offers no key to the analysis of man's "hidden potential." A different situation arises if activity is understood not only as changing external reality but also as transforming man's inner world and as disclosing and realising his latent potentials during the development of his relationships with the external world, including the subjective worlds of his fellow human beings and nature (which does not have to be understood simply as a sum total of "things"). This transformation of one's world includes communication, "understand-

ing," "dialogue," etc.

The approach to activity which regards it as nothing but a goal-oriented change of something actually given in reality essentially amounts to limiting its meaning to a mere **application** of norms, goals, programs, etc. worked out in the course of its development. Of course, they may and do present themselves as stereotyped schemes and "paradigms" of human activeness.

It is the overstatement of this aspect of the application of activity programs and of the need to disengage oneself first from their creation and formation and second from the possibilities of revising, perfecting and discarding them, that causes the attempts, allegedly on objective grounds, to erase distinctions between behaviour and activity and to treat the latter as behaviour "ennobled" by socio-cultural regulators.

Should we remove the aspect of creativity and the development of specifically human methods and forms of relationship to the world from the content of the theoretical concept of activity and limit the latter to simply the aspect of application, or should we see activity as a specifically human form of the development of forms and methods of relationship to the world? I am in favour of the second approach. Without this the "paradigm," deprived of organic links with the socio-historical process of cultural creation effected through activity, turns into a mere outline of "culturalized behaviour," while the creative process of building and developing culture, both material and spiritual, becomes detached from real-life human "affairs" within the framework of the adopted "paradigms" and turns into something quite far-removed from everyday human concerns and something unusual and extraordinary.

Among the reasons for doubting the use of the concept of activity as an explanatory principle is that it is far from being a universal norm of human culture. There is a fully justifiable view which points out the dangers of unrestrained "activism" as a value set. Of course, all these factors must necessarily be considered when discussing problems of activity in its entirety. One should distinguish, however, an "activist" conception of activity, which appears as a value set, or a general conception of activity as an explicitly expressed socio-cultural norm, including in theoretical consciousness (as it was expressed particularly in German classical philosophy), from activity as an objectively immanent feature of the development of human culture. The second can be and, indeed, is achieved in widely differing historical forms. There are societies (or historical phases of the existence of societies) where the dynamic, creative and productive aspects of the activity approach to the world come to the fore. In these societies activity is regarded as a great asset and an activity-based attitude to the world is formed. There were also types of societies in which greater emphasis was put on traditions and the preservation of the established socio-cultural norms. Of course, different value sets and world views dominate in such societies. However, the illusory nature of ideas about the "natural" and "immutable"

character of the norms preserved by conservative traditions is self-evident. These norms themselves are the product of creative activity in a definite historical situation and in one way or another they are overcome in other historical situations in the process of similar creative activity.

Finally, let us deal with the sceptical or restrained attitude to the constructive possibilities of the concept of activity. This is sometimes brought about by the non-acceptance of specific versions of the concept of activity or forms of the activity approach. As a matter of fact, the critical arguments relating essentially to these specific versions are often interpreted as being opposed to the widespread use of the category of activity in general. When assessing critical arguments it is therefore necessary to bear in mind all the time against what conception of activity they may be considered to be validly used.

Generally speaking, the concept of activity signifying a definite type of approach to reality, is not, in our view, the initial concept of some **theory** of activity but rather the basis for an **activity-based approach** to analysing the "human world" and serves, in the words of E.G. Yudin, as the basic "explanatory principle" of this analysis. The activity approach outlines the general contours of investigations into the "human world" as being a world of activity unifying aspects of its development and realisation, unifying its essential forces and their concrete historical manifestations in the life of society and individuals and diversifying forms of material and spiritual culture. In essence, this approach offers to social and humanistic knowledge what the contemporary methodology of science calls "a scientific picture of reality," or in this case — of the reality of man and his world.

1. E.G. Yudin. Sistemny podkhod i printsip deyatelnosti (Systems Approach and the Principle of Activity), Moscow, 1978, p. 266.
2. E.G. Yudin. Sistemny podkhod i printsip deyatelnosti (Systems Approach and the Principle of Activity), p. 268.
3. K. Marx, F. Engels, Coll. Works, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975, Vol. 3, pp. 276, 277.
4. Vygotsky, L.S., Razvitiye Vysshikh psikhitcheskikh funktsiy (The Development of the Higher Psychical Functions), Moscow, 1960, p. 101.
5. See Elkonin, D.B., Psikhologiya igri (The Psychology of Play), Moscow, 1978, p. 293.
6. Buyeva, L.P. Deyatelnost i obshcheniye (Activity and Communication), Moscow, 1978, p. 49.

Chapter 2

THE CATEGORY OF ACTIVITY: INEXHAUSTIBLE POSSIBILITIES AND THE LIMITS OF APPLICABILITY

By G.S. Batishchev

Two most closely interrelated tasks have to be solved in order to make the general meaning of this essay clear. The first of these is to indicate such possibilities and to reveal such subject areas within whose limits it would be desirable to proceed with research methodology largely based on the category of object-oriented activity and which, however, are often overlooked precisely because the philosophical status of the above-mentioned category is interpreted wrongly. What is it that stands in the way of using the opportunities that are currently being wasted? What is it that is impoverishing this potentially rich field of research? In no way is it the antipathy towards or the underestimation of the category of activity but rather the reverse, i.e. immoderate indulgence in it and its shameless elevation to a kind of "supercategory" status. Really, this is a case of killing it with kind words. The category of object-oriented activity, even if treated in the broadest possible sense, has some inherent limitations and both temporal and spatial boundaries that cannot be removed. It is not limitless as it is alleged. Failure to understand this is precisely the reason why a whole set of problems are neglected and lost. We even lose sight of and cannot get to grips with all those problems concerning the correlation of the sphere of activity with the factors, qualities and levels of existence that for ever remain **beyond the limits** of this sphere. In order to be able to see such factors or levels as being immanently characteristic of the existence of subjects, no "supercategory" should be allowed to stand in the researcher's light. . . .

Thus, the first task formulated above may be resolved only in the course of solving the second task and simultaneously with it, which is by using all measurements and parameters for outlining precisely the boundaries of the methodological applicability of the category of object activity. These are the boundaries that simply cannot be broken, even though their physical configuration may change with time to a certain degree. As these boundaries are drawn, we shall be able to see more clearly and make an approximation, even if just an initial one, of the

positive problems, in dealing with which it would be necessary to continue applying justifiably and circumspectly the category of activity.

So, it is not a matter of replacing the unrestrained eulogizing of this category by some kind of reprisal, ostracism or nihilism in relation to it. Far from it. What is meant here is that it is necessary to attempt to acknowledge and carefully consider the entire **experience, both positive and negative,** of the different conceptual applications of this category, including in the area of the so-called activity approach. It is also necessary to understand that disregard for the basic limits is not only ineffective and even disastrous for those spheres to which activity is unjustifiably extrapolated or transferred, but also for the category itself. This sort of disregard is sometimes attended by the degradation of the meaning of this important category, its vulgarization and even replacement. Therefore, we now have to protect the extra-activity areas of the subject's being from inclusion in the super-category of activity, and, at the same time, protect the semantic content of the category of action from some fashionable versions of the "activity approach" and its crude claims to universality.

If activity is considered as the subject matter of investigation at any level, then it is obviously not universal. And there is no point in wasting more energy on trying to disprove the "all-consuming praxis" which is in tune with the notorious, absolute egocentricity of "The Unique" by Max Stirner. . . As for activity as an **explanatory principle,** the universalist claims are still very solid with regard to this approach. The fatal mistake here is that the explanatory strength of activity as a methodological principle is not regarded as being dependent on the boundaries of its object area, is not adjusted and is not kept under the constant control of the circumspect and critical reflection which could protect us from the measure of the category's applicability being exceeded, from its dogmatic universality and the belief that it has a guaranteed power at all times and in all possible worlds.

The author of this text was also to a great extent guilty of eulogizing the category of activity. And this guilt is exacerbated by the fact that this was happening not in the process of psychological or some other scientific formulation of this category but in the attempt to give it a much broader, purely philosophical definition — as a universal principle.[1] The experience of the twenty years that have passed since then has shown that the vital contents of the "dialectic of activity" the author wrote about at that time may still be relevant today only on condition sine qua non that the boundaries of this content, the boundaries of the category of activity as an explanatory principle be carefully considered. These **boundaries** were found precisely in this way, i.e. by applying this principle in the most fundamental philosophical areas and due to the pledge not to turn it into an impregnable dogma but, on the contrary, make it **dependent** on the positive or negative experience of the spiritual work put into it. This is exactly what saved us from elevating it to a **substance.**

Moreover, this made it possible for us to see that activity is not the only possible, universal **mode of being** of man[2], culture and sociality, and that it is not the only and all-embracing mode of man's relationship with the world.

There are, however, those who unhesitatingly and persistently insist that activity is a "substance of consciousness," a "substance of culture" and of all possible forms of sociality, etc. Many of them are unaware of how close their position is to elevating human activity also to the level of **absolute substance;** it inevitably, logically becomes this once the premise of **anthropocentrism** is accepted, even if only indirectly. This means that the whole of objective reality outside human consciousness may be reduced to a world of objects-things that are axiologically empty and apriori lower than man. It means therefore that man is at the top of the Universe.

Let me explain. What is meant here is not something that is local, transient, basically limited and makes up a part of some wider reality (the sphere of value relations, for instance). Any serious reflection on matters concerning the essence of man as a subject cannot avoid relying on universals. It would be pointless to believe therefore that a strictly particular and purely **special theory of activity** can be evolved, and that someone can form such a theory by abstracting himself from the conceptual alternative: either humanity devotes itself to the service of the Universe and, in effect, **its** open substantiality and **its** creative possibilities, or humanity serves only itself and **its own** substantialised egocentricity. There is no other alternative unless we take eclectic and half-baked theories into account.

An attempt to offer a compromise solution was made by the authors of a concept suggesting that activity be rejected as a substance and instead affirmed as the mode of being of "social matter" (like movement — as an "attribute"). If carefully considered, however, this attempt must still lead to either a kind of anthropocentrism, only dressed up in different categories, or a rejection of it. Let us consider the **problem of the threshold of deobjectification** in order to show that any compromise solution inevitably suffers from this kind of split.

The thing is that the less conservative and true to the cultural paradigm (or system of such paradigms established and accepted within it) an activity sphere remains and the more it seems necessary and significant to have it enriched with a substantially new content, the more marked is the objectively occurring transfer of emphasis onto the processes of deobjectification. It is precisely these last that are evoked and can enrich the activity sphere, extend its subject area and make its composition so complex that there results a certain degree of contradiction with the latter which is permissible for the dominant paradigm system; this, in turn, may ultimately lead to the transformation of the paradigms themselves and of the various types of activity. However, as long as the level of the development of activity at each stage reached in history of

the progress and improvement of society, social group or individual (for he/she personifies definite types of sociality) remains basically unchanged as regards its type, the limit of the accessibility of objective contents to deobjectification remains relatively stable and just as relatively unsurpassible. This means that any cultural era, society, social group or individual always has a historically determined threshold of deobjectification beyond which there are such features which may become accessible only at a completely different level of activity and different activity paradigms. Let us call them **beyond-the-threshold** paradigms. Since all kinds of human activity take place in standard or problem (but not creative-problem) situations they do not cross this threshold and remain within the **pre-threshold** sphere. It is only through truly creative endeavour, i.e. creativity in the most narrow and strict sense of the word, that a shift of the threshold may be achieved and this is a historically important business.

The configuration of the pre-threshold sphere has little in common with the purely spatial boundary between the already discovered and not yet discovered territories. Spatial, indeed any empirical, expansion of activity is also possible without the need to cross any thresholds. An analogy with visual, auditory and similar thresholds is only appropriate to a certain degree. We don't have to look very far for the beyond-the-threshold contents; on the contrary, they permeate through reality as a whole and us ourselves. One should not confuse, however, the beyond-the-threshold contents with those which, though not deobjectified by the particular kind of activity referred to, can easily become accessible to it or to some differently structured activity. This is true of a large number of factors accompanying any activity, remaining outside its object and operating alongside it or "behind the subject's back": unarticulated or obscured factors or ones which are linked with a different paradigm, culture, etc. Generally speaking, they may even enter an activity's object, which is sufficiently accessible to them, in the event of a major shift of the activity and its set. Still, they should all be related in equal measure to pre-threshold contents. Beyond-the-threshold contents require not merely a shift of activity in a different particular direction but also a basically different level of perfection.

The concept of deobjectification thresholds puts into question the idea that activity is a way that man, his culture, etc., exists in reality. Activity is only the way that pre-threshold features exist. Besides, man also contains, is permeated with, and his active life may be constantly affected by, beyond-the-threshold features, the "hidden potential" of his existence which includes, in particular, factors that do not enter his consciousness. This makes it feasible for the first time to formulate the problems of true **creation,** deep **communion** and of all levels of **value** in the strict sense of the word.

Creation differs from activity in that it **can** do precisely what activity **cannot** in principle. The former is the progressive shifting of the

deobjectification thresholds themselves which restrict the latter and limit it to its own sphere — this in every case of its relatively external (in relation to the original paradigm) expansion. Of course, creation is **also a deed,** a creative act. But prior to becoming an act and in order to become one, creativity must first be a particular kind of supra-activity attitude of the subject to himself and to the world, an **attitude** to everything in existence as to something that could be different. A creative attitude is one that sees the world as being a world of **problems and puzzles;** even more important is that it is a relationship that the subject enters into not only with his pre-threshold features and qualities but with his **beyond-the-threshold ones as well.** And this is possible only due to the fact that creativity is essentially **intersubjective** rather than "monological" or monosubjective regardless of the extent of the subject's social and historical mediation. This refers us to the problems of deep communion.

In contrast to communicational contiguities, contacts, interactions and exchanges, deep communion is an ontological process consisting of two inextricably linked parts. The first one is the actualization of the virtual essential sense of community felt between subjects meeting each other, a kind of extraction of this community feeling from the darkness of "non-existence" and oblivion and the affirmation of it as their common universal point of origin in the dialectic of the Universe. The second is the re-establishment of vital mutual communion and the self-determination of each by means of the affirmation of the existence of the other. M. Bakhtin believed that "To be is to communicate." During communion the configurations of individual deobjectification thresholds do not always coincide; on the contrary, they diverge, intersect and make us face what used to be an enigma within and even outside ourselves. Communion is a meeting and a process developing simultaneously **on different levels** which cannot be reduced one to the other in principle and are completely different from each other with regard to their apparency. So can they really be mere manifestations of a single activity origin?

Perhaps this could be possible if each and every subject and the entire sense of community between them with all its levels and potentials could be contained within a single organic system. Since this is impossible, such containment and inclusion may be effected only at the price of damaging reductions: from many levels to one level, from what is heterogeneous to what is subject to sublation within one predominant organic system. "Activity as a whole is an organic system whereby, as in a living organism, everything is reflected in something else and that something else reflects everything in itself. But this is not enough. In addition, activity with its highly complex structure is constantly developing. An indispensable feature of an organically developing system is its capacity to create during the course of its development organs that it lacks."[3]

But precisely because it is the only organic system activity is intolerant of anything which does not yield to **sublation** and transformation into "organs that it lacks" or into something auxiliary and subordinate to its own system-forming source. What is possible here is for development to occur through a higher organisation of the same source, but it is impossible for an alien source to be accepted on a par, on an equal footing. Consequently, the attainment of **perfection,** requiring the overcoming of the self in the name of something more perfect is also impossible. Activity as an organic system **has its own yardstick** in the sense that it permits its own development only in order to strengthen and enrich itself and to triumph over the outside element it has sublated, absorbed and assimilated. It applies a "predetermined concept of scale" to the world. Meanwhile, deep communion **begins when the application of one's own standards to the world and concern above all for one's own development end.**

The dominant feature of each person's being in relation to his intersubjectivity is set by him — **on his Other Person.**

In effect, the phenomenon of deep communion shows that processes and relationships in which subjects are deeply involved with each other intrinsically have many levels and refuse to fit in the Procrustean bedstead of any organic system unless they are forced to do so through all kinds of reduction. They cannot be made to conform to the principle of activity and they exceed the limits of its explanatory potential. Moreover, whole new mountains of problems are now appearing concerning the transition of contents which are above and beyond activity into the realm of action. There are also important questions about how several organic systems join together to form wholes each of which constitutes something larger than a mere organic system — more like a **harmonic system.** It can also include elements that are not subjected to removal (and processing) and enter with them into a relationship of a **polyphonic** type on an equal footing if, of course, the participation or entry is at least to some extent constructive in character.

In fact, this is a major topic in its own right, i.e. the necessity of research, investigation and study of dialectics as dialectics of harmonic wholes.

Finally, the activity principle cannot really be applied to **value** relations or aspirations. What is described today as personality orientation may only be presented as a fragment, as the final section of the thread of infinite aspiration. At the aspiration level, the essence of man may be expressed and explained not **from below,** by his basic needs, or as a norm useful to man in terms of his functions and needs, but in a different way — through its infinite journey and universal creative destination.

Meanwhile, in the current activity approach it is acceptable to regard all motivation in general as nothing more than the concretization of requirements, and requirements as an expression of "need." Thus a car-

dinal limitation is imposed on the subject's capacity to deobjectify the measure and essence of each object regardless of its functional usefulness and **without introducing his own standard.** It has turned out that the likening of activity to the properties of the objectively present object is only relative and is limited by the determinism and selectivity of requirements or, to put it in a nutshell, by the individual system of measurement of the "interested" subject and his self-interest even if it is generic. Hence the attempts which have been observed within the activity approach to get away from reactivism (of the behaviourist or neobehaviourist type) and from reducing man to a puppet driven by external stimuli by appealing to self-activeness and self-determination. And it is at this point that the subject's "own" requirements are recalled as constituting the inner cause of his self-activeness. However, the greater the predominance of self-activeness over the "environmental" factors the more catastrophic it is to "edit" any object to which activity should liken itself in order to justify the name **object-oriented** activity. In this connection all "experimentation" and its orientation and search directionality is becoming increasingly prejudiced against, and blind and deaf to its own measure which is free from any self-interest.

In fact the choice between reactivity and self-activeness puts the researcher on a path that will not and cannot lead him to activity capable of putting into practice value-related aspirations. This choice of two should be discarded. Then we will be on the way to explaining not motivation from requirements of any sort but, on the contrary, control of requirements and their subordination to value-related motivation. But value-related contents, whose importance for the subject is unconditional, cannot be reduced to any kinds of activity products, derivatives or results. The value-related dimensions of culture and their sources found in the inexhaustible objective dialectic of the Universe demonstrate to us — i.e. to humanity as a whole and to each and every potential subject — the unobtrusive grandeur of the tendencies of cosmogenesis which we are required to cooperate with.

The prospects and problems of the entire theme of activity are the prospects of restructuring mankind in order to produce much greater **objectivity, the ability to judge not just by one's own standards, and openness** to the measure of every object, whether finite or infinitely complex. Learning to live more objectively — not only in means but also in values — is the strategy by the light of which we must clarify the role of the category of activity and its limits.

1. Batishchev, G.S. Deyatelnostnaya sushchnost tcheloveka kak filosofsky printsip. Problema tcheloveka v sovremennoy filosofii (The Activity Nature of Man as a Philosophical Principle. The Problem of Man in Modern Philosophy), Moscow, 1969, pp. 73-144.
2. Batishchev, G.S. Protivoretchiye kak kategoriya dialektitcheskoy logiki (Contradiction as a Category of Dialectical Logic), Moscow, 1963, p. 15 and further. In this work communion and creativity are reduced to activity.
3. Zintchenko, V.P. Iskusstvenny intellekt i paradoxy psikhologii (Also published in English as Artificial Intellect and the Paradoxes of Psychology), Priroda, 1986, No. 2, p. 68.

Chapter 3

ACTIVITY AND RATIONALITY

by I.T. Kasavin

In the history of thought, the concepts of activity and rationality were first formulated as antipodes. In 17th century West European philosophy, rationality implied the ability to reason logically, systematically and reflexively. In the 18th century, thanks to the German classics, philosophical investigations focused on activity. They regarded it as some kind of spontaneous activeness of consciousness free from any norms of logic and reflection. It itself created a foundation for all kinds of norms, particularly those of human behaviour rather than reasoning. Rationality and activity were thus conceived as two opposites of human consciousness: the first as the highest level of its structure and culture, and the second as the basis for and starting point of its functioning and development.

Later on activity and rationality were put in the position of absolute, incompatible opposites (this concept was already contained in the Fichtean idea of activity). This was as a result of the argument that developed between exponents of the romantic and voluntaristic doctrines and the "philosophy of life," on the one hand, and the positivists on the other. While philosophical irrationalists believed that the main features of activity were the state of chaos, uncontainable power and all-conquering passion, their opponents, the champions of positivist rationalism, came to the defence of carefully reasoned decision-making, the supremacy of strict laws of logic and intellectual impassivity. Both sides, however, were united in their understanding of the activity-related and rational sides of human nature; notwithstanding, they assessed these two sides differently. It was not surprising therefore that the distinction between activity and rationality continued to grow. In fact, the Hegelian attempt to build a universal concept of activity as the process of rationalizing work by the spirit, a way of considerably narrowing the gap between the two opposites, went unnoticed. Western philosophers also found it hard to accept Marx's idea of the practical, activity-related nature of rationality.

The development of concepts of activity and rationality has resulted in the current trend towards blurring the distinctions between the two concepts and using one of them to gain a more profound understanding of the other. What opportunities and problems do we find along this

path?

The idea that rational and reasonable coincide is being increasingly questioned by modern thinkers who find more and more arguments to disprove it. It is slowly becoming obvious that rationality is not determined by nor limited to the sphere of consciousness but is rather a feature of human activity as such. Moreover, being a characteristic of various forms of activity, rationality stands out particularly in object-transforming activity, in praxis which Marx regarded as being the basis and model for rationality. While indicating the goal-setting and goal-oriented nature of labour activity, Marx wrote: "At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will."[1] In this classic formulation, Marx demonstrates the oneness of the rational character of activity and the activity-related nature of rationality because rationality applied to activity acquires the form of goal-orientedness. But does this deal with the problem? Not quite, because goal-orientedness must itself be understood as a derivative from the nature of activity, that is from the relation between its object and the sum of the means that facilitate the fulfilling of the goal — when the goal coincides with the result.

Moreover, to limit the analysis of activity to the aspect of goal-orientedness would amount to approaching activity from a formal and purified position. Even though this approach is based on a rather powerful premise of activity presupposing "conformity to the goal," it ultimately proves ineffective for investigating real-life human activity which only ideally conforms to the goal and, as a rule, fails to correspond to it in full measure. This approach was made known by the sociologist Max Weber who, as is known, distinguished between value rationality, or activity which is rational in terms of value, and goal rationality, or activity whose rationality is having a certain goal in mind. The first type of activity is based on the implementation of a certain system of values, which may be exemplified by ritual actions whose elements are linked with some primordial pattern of behaviour. The second type of activity is a procedure whereby intermediate goals, whose significance is that each one of them serves as a means of achieving the next goal, are gradually achieved. This type of activity is fundamental to bureaucratic capitalism.[2]

In his criticism of the concept of "economic and technological rationality" introduced by P. Struve (who was influenced by Weber's sociology), Lenin exposed a number of flaws in Weber's own concept. Lenin showed, for instance, that the concept of rationality used in this case is, in essence, a formal one because it fails to characterise social antagonisms leading to various changes in the structure of production and, instead, presents itself as a particular norm which is primary in relation to socio-

economic development and is a condition of it. This inattention to the social causes and end results of the rationalisation of production does not prevent capitalism from achieving, at a certain stage of its development, a highly rational and reasonable distribution of labour within a factory, wrote Lenin as he analysed the merits and demerits of the Taylorist system of "scientific management."[3] This system creates conditions for the implementation of the narrow, formal ideal of rationality, which is possible in so far as the combination of elements of activity serves to carry out some particular, purely "technical" tasks whose end product is quite predictable in its parameters and relatively independent from the general system of social relations. Friedrich Engels pointed out that the rationality of pre-capitalist forms of labour, which presupposes a relative conformity between the goals set and the means of putting them into practice, is limited. Thus he wrote that "All hitherto existing modes of production have aimed merely at achieving the most immediately and directly useful effect of labour."[4]

The formal concept of rationality characterizes not only activity within the system of bourgeois bureaucracy, as Weber believed, but also activity which he described as ritual. This may be seen from the example of superstitions like the practice of rain dances.

Controlling weather and making sure that there is enough water for the land is one of the major goals of collective magic rituals in primitive societies. In most of the southern regions of the world the supply of water depends upon showers or heavy tropical rains without which vegetation withers and animals and men languish and die. Therefore "rainmakers" even form a special class of magicians in primitive societies. "The methods by which they attempt to discharge the duties of their office are commonly, though not always, based on the principle of homoeopathic or imitative magic. If they wish to make rain they simulate it by sprinkling water or mimicking clouds; if their object is to stop rain and cause drought, they avoid water and resort to warmth and fire for the sake of drying up the too abundant moisture."[5] The conformity of these actions to the goal was evident to the primitive man, or, at least, ". . . the fallacy was far from easy to detect, the failure by no means obvious, since in many, perhaps in most cases, the desired event did actually follow, at a longer or shorter interval, the performance of the rite which was designed to bring it about; and a mind of more than common acuteness was needed to perceive that, even in these cases, the rite was not necessarily the cause of the event. A ceremony intended to make the wind blow or the rainfall, or to work the death of an enemy, will always be followed, sooner or later, by the occurrence it is meant to bring to pass; and the primitive man may be excused for regarding the occurrence as a direct result of the ceremony, and the best possible proof of its efficacy."[6]

For example, during a severe drought the Australian Dieri tribe loudly lament their unhappy state and call upon Mura-muras, the spirits of

their remote predecessors, to grant them the power to bring on heavy rainfall. They believe that rain is generated in the clouds as a direct result of their ceremonies and through the influence of the Mura-muras. The Dieri bring on rain in the following way. They dig a hole approximately three by four metres square and make a conical hut over it. Then an influential elder of the tribe uses a sharp flint to bleed two wizards who are supposed to have received a special inspiration from the Mura-muras. The blood, drawn from their arms below the elbow, is made to flow on the other tribesmen crowded into the hut. At the same time the two bleeding wizards throw handfuls of down about, some of which adheres to the blood-stained bodies of their comrades, while the rest floats in the air. The blood is considered to represent the rain, and the down the clouds. During the ceremony two large stones are placed in the middle of the hut; they stand for gathering clouds and presage rain. Then the same wizards carry away the two stones for about twenty kilometres, and lift them up as high as they can into the tallest tree around. Meanwhile the other men gather gypsum, pound it fine, and throw it into a water-hole. It is believed that the Mura-muras see this and at once cause clouds to appear in the sky. Finally, the men surround the hut, and, lowering their heads, butt at it like rams until only the heaviest logs remain untouched. The piercing of the hut with their head symbolises the piercing of the clouds, and the fall of the hut, the fall of the rain. The act of placing high up in trees the two stones, which stand for clouds, is a way of making the real clouds to mount up in the sky.

Frazer gives many similar examples to show that such pagan rituals are very carefully thought out, highly intelligent and complex. So why can't pagan rituals be assessed as being rational in the full sense of the word? We know that they did seem to be rational to primitive peoples precisely because the requirement of goal-orientedness was fulfilled. Moreover, we may abstract ourselves from what sorcery **seemed to be** to primitive man; after all we do know that sorcery cannot actually lead to the achievement of the goal it is aimed at. But in this case the question arises as to what function sorcery did fulfill successfully if for thousands of years it was believed to have an enormous power to transform things (in the objectively existing world)?

To answer this question we should consider what a primitive man, clan or tribe as a whole could **really** do in the conditions of, for example, a prolonged drought. Dig wells? Look for springs? But if this were possible (there do exist special pagan rituals for searching for water but they are connected with the arrival of a tribe in a previously uncultivated area) it would have been done from the very beginning, prior to the onset of the drought. In the extreme conditions that primitive man constantly found himself, changing one's own form at least if not nature's, was a common way out of the problem. To ensure the tribe's unity and cohesion and the concentration of all of man's vital forces in a situation where it was impossible to change the external conditions of human existence

— this was the purpose of pagan rituals in the life of primitive man.

Being the result of an unconscious substitution of goals, pagan rituals remained only quasi-conformable to the goal and illusory, even though effective. The rationality of this kind of activity is a limited one because of the failure to understand the actual object of the transformation caused by pagan rituals. Herodotus told the story of a West-African tribe which decided to punish the Sahara wind for having dried up all its water basins. The tribe went to the desert to fight a war against the southern wind (the pagan ritual of driving away the evil spirit); as a result, the entire tribe was buried by Samum, the hot desert wind. It seems obvious to us that they should have sheltered from the wind in a safe place until it had passed. But isn't it more worthy of Man to fight against danger, even if it is in spite of the actually prevailing conditions, than to submit to the deadly objective reality?

Thus, the conformity of an activity to its goal does not guarantee its ratioanlity, just as a goal does not necessarily conform to the means used to achieve it, and vice versa. These are merely characteristics of a limited, formal rationality. A dilemma arises in this connection: either we admit that any activity is only relatively rational and that we have no objective criteria for preferring one form of activity to another, or we look for more profound reasons for its rationality. In the latter case we should agree that rationality itself must be dealt with in a broader sense — as a combination of the relative and the absolute. And if it is clear that every closed and separate system of activity may be regarded as a relatively rational one, then the quest for an absolute basis for rationality comes up against difficulties of a methodological nature because the absoluteness of rationality should not be treated as something static either, immutable and apriori. What is the way out of this situation?

Let us consider the case where the degree to which the elements of an activity conform to each other is very much relative, even if the activity is of a closed type. In particular, the means seem to be constantly "setting the pace" of the object's development and the level of its culture, and they, in their turn, lag behind their constantly advancing goal which leads them on without, at the same time, being free from them. In this way, the target of primitive land cultivation — in order to meet immediate food requirements — changed after improvements were made to agricultural tools and implements: with the invention and use of a wooden plough production began to be oriented towards a simple exchange. This means that the dialectic of rationality even within activity itself is highly diverse. Now let us consider the mode of activity in its social context. It is not our job to give a full description of the social context of activity. We shall limit ourselves by quoting Karl Marx who said that the product of labour (as of any other activity), in which the labour-process itself is dialectically sublated and disappears in the product, is "Nature's material adapted by a change of form to the wants of man."[7] In our analysis, therefore, we shall consider the extreme poles of activity

to be its object on the one hand, and social needs on the other, and then focus our attention on the latter. In our opinion, a social need may be described as a manifestation of the social subject's dependence on the objective conditions of his existence. In its turn, this manifestation is a necessary condition for a particular type of activity, because it shapes the activity's goals, regulative factors, etc.

The concept of a social need is important to us because it is precisely within the context of social needs that activity's inner content is revealed and realised as a result of which it acquires a general social meaning. It may be said that the relationship which exists between one or other type of activity and the social needs connected with it allows us to talk in terms of activity's **social rationality.** Clearly this relationship appears in various forms. If we start from the known premise that activity is divided into productive and reproductive,[8] it is easy to understand that the first of these not so much satisfies certain needs as creates new ones, while the second type of activity is geared precisely towards satisfying needs. Thus, the activity of the innovative Russian engineer I.P. Kulibin made certain opportunities a reality and met the requirements of modern trends in international technological development, but was completely out of tune with the economic, industrial and managerial requirements of Russia[9] in late 18th-early 19th centuries. Kulibin's paradox was that because of his talent as an inventor his productive activity gave rise to requirements that were quite different from those that it was supposed to satisfy (he was supposed to design toys for the tsar's family and wealthy landowners). Perhaps it was because of this paradoxical nature of Kulibin's social role that he became obsessed by the idea of a "perpetuum mobile" and, as a result, his talent was used irrationally. The fact that Kulibin's activity was useless for science was a reflection of the general uselessness of people like him in the conditions of tsarist Russia based on serfdom.

Another example is the fate of a modest Italian teacher Amedeo Avogadro. It took fifty years and the efforts of his follower S. Cannizzaro for his hypothesis to be accepted as a theory. This theory built significantly on the principles formulated by atomic scientist John Dalton, introduced order into atomic weight chemistry which had been in a state of chaos throughout the first half of the 19th century. Avogadro's theory provided a basis for stereochemistry and a method for analysing various physical and chemical properties of substances. In 1811, however, when the theory appeared, it created more problems and demands for the substantiation of chemistry than the already existing atomism of Dalton, even though the theory itself was in essence a solution to the problem because it explained the law of volume relations and by this satisfied the urgent need to develop further the chemical theory. That was the time of momentous advances in chemistry and a growing interest in its results by industry. In these conditions, Avogadro's productive and innovative activity was fully rational even though it failed to receive

public approval because of the wrong interpretation by Dalton and his followers of the actual requirements of atomism. And while the productive engineering activity of Kulibin was rational only intrinsically, like any activity by a talented person, Avogadro's activity was also rational in broader scientific and, ultimately, general social terms. In our minds, therefore, Kulibin's name is associated with the tragedy of an outstanding inventor and scientist obstructed by a backward social system, while Avogadro went down in history as a necessary link in the chain of development of chemical theory.

Let us try to compare the socio-rational activity of a scientist with the narrow rationality of magic activity. Although the former has a clearly expressed productive, and the latter reproductive character, one may find a number of reproductive features in scientific activity and many creative, productive elements in traditional ritual activity. The difference between them is that repetition of, for instance, scientific experiments to obtain more accurate results is generally directed towards the development of science, while the purpose of magic creativity is the preservation of the initial system for resolving an increasingly complicated problem. Anyway, the opposing of productive to reproductive activity is not merely relative but it also fails to conform to the contrariety between social and formal rationality. Moreover, activity characterised by formal rationality should not be treated as asocial; it is also included in the system of social relationships, just like any other activity. Now what is this difference that we have sought and intuitively felt.

Magic is not simply one of many types of activity that a primitive man practices. It serves as a universal framework for both his reasoning and his practical activity; it is a primitive society's "outlook on the world" of sorts, which is not chosen (for the society has not yet developed a cultural store from which to choose) and not evaluated (for there is no other system of values). Territorial and social isolation and backward production relations put primitive consciousness and practice into the dark dungeon of magic schematism. By contrast, science, which is a comparatively late product of cultural development, emerged in the process of the conflict and interaction of a whole range of cultural traditions and practices by choosing from among them and by critically evaluating, analysing and reflecting on them. Since science existed within a rich social environment, it had the choice of either conforming or not conforming to one or another system of values, social requirements or tendencies. Science proved to be the only means by whch man could cognize the world and himself. Moreover, science was deliberately devised and developed specifically for this purpose.

It is evident that any activity, if it claims to be socially rational, should not be based on any one isolated social position or system of convictions. On the contrary, its very capacity for making a practical choice and assessing it reflexively by using the available cultural resources should serve as its point of departure. In this case, activity will not be threat-

ened by the "magic circle" allegedly imposed upon it by its theoretical premises and practical conditions. On the contrary, activity includes entering this circle and analysing the resultant effects. Viewing it from this approach to rationality, irrational activity is either that which is guided by intuitive and passive ideals precluding any choice of strategy, or activity bogged down with the person's recurring doubts and uncertainty about himself and amounting, in fact, to the inability to engage in any effective and constructive activity. But at the same time activity inspired by hollow or naive optimism or by unbridled fanaticism (which, in its intent to achieve a goal, is blind to man's real needs, the fact that activity of any kind is included in the system of social relationships and that any separate strategy is only restricted and relative) only appears to be rational. Activity that tends to ignore its own limits (unlike activity that changes its limits) inevitably degenerates into irrationality. The reason why dialectical thinking forms the most adequate image of activity is that it leads man to see the real complexity of the conditions in which his activity is carried out, to see that the results of this activity are problematic and that there is always the risk of making a mistake. At the same time dialectical thinking convincingly demonstrates the enormous capacity of man for cognizing and changing the world and himself and develops in him a need for such activity. The ideas that rationality is based on activity and that rationality may serve as a measure of activity's development need to be further expanded on. One should expect, however, that this procedure will never be completed because, fortunately, human activity is somewhat imperfect while its rationality is absolutely incomplete.

1. Karl Marx, Capital, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, Vol. 1, p. 174.
2. Weber, M. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. L., 1930.
3. See: V.I. Lenin, Coll. Works, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, Vol. 20, p. 152.
4. F. Engels, Dialectics of Nature, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, p. 184.
5. Frazer, James George. The Golden Bough, in two volumes, Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, 1922, Vol. 1, p. 247-248.
6. Ibid., pp. 242-243.
7. Karl Marx, Capital, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, Vol.I, p. 176.
8. Ogurtsov, A.P., Yudin, E.G. Deyatelnost (Activity), Filosofsky entsiklopeditchesky slovar (Philosophical Encyclopaedic Dictionary), Moscow, 1983, p. 151.

Chapter 4

ACTIVITY, BEHAVIOR AND CREATIVITY

By A.L. Nikiforov

The concept of activity has been widely discussed in Soviet philosophical literature as the analysis of the most essential characteristics of human activity and its structure. I would like to proceed from generally accepted notions and concepts of activity, and to focus on those features which seem to be particularly relevant to the following analysis.

Activity is defined in most general terms as a specifically human form of activeness the content of which is the goal-oriented changing and transformation of the world around us.[1] We build dams and houses, cultivate land and smelt steel, develop theories and make shoes — all this is activity. What is it then that sets this activeness apart from, for instance, the activeness of animals who also get food, make homes for themselves and raise offspring?

The difference, primarily, is that activity is goal-oriented, i.e. it is the kind of activeness that is directed towards the achievement of a consciously set goal. Aimless activeness is not activity. For instance, when a person yawns or takes a walk, he/she displays activeness but not activity. Activity is motivated by a goal; as long as there is no goal there is no activity; once a goal appears activity may begin. The importance that a goal has for activity is shown by the fact that we often name an activity according to the goal it is directed to, and in answer to the question "What are you doing?" we answer: "Building a house," 'Cooking lunch," "Starting a camp-fire," "Fishing," etc.

Another important feature of activity is that it is **thought out** in advance. Once a goal is set, the person considers the situation in which he/she will have to act, chooses the ways and means of achieving his/her goal and plans the sequence of his or her future actions. An ideal outline of activity is thus created which is determined by the goal, on the one hand, and by the situation of the subject of activity and the conditions in which he has to act on the other. When working on his framework of action, the subject relies on his knowledge of the situation, the ways and means of achieving his goal and the laws of nature that govern the interaction of things and the course of events in objective reality. He also relies on his ability to reason, i.e. to think coherently and logically, in

order to plan carefully the order of his future actions and to predict the possible consequences thereof. It is often stressed that, in contrast to animal behaviour, human activity has a conscious character, i.e. it is carried out with the participation of consciousness. But in this case we have something larger than that in mind: activity is not merely conscious in character but it also contains an element of planning and prediction of possible consequences as well as a logical framework. I could, for instance, quite consciously put my tongue out at my own reflection in a mirror that could hardly be described as activity.

Any kind of activity is characterized by a definite structure, i.e. a specific set and sequence of actions.[2] The sequence and character of actions largely depend on the objective conditions of activity: the process of achieving one and the same goal may include various different actions under various different circumstances. Therefore a set of individual actions may become activity only if they are directed towards a single goal; it is only this goal that makes the actions meaningful in the eyes of the subject. There is no activity without a common goal, otherwise actions become meaningless.

A complex activity may include, as its constituent parts, actions which themselves may become separate activities in a different situation. Thus, the process of getting dressed may prove to be rather a difficult activity for a person who has just got out of bed after a prolonged and exhausting illness. However, any action taken out of the context of a definite activity either loses its meaning for the subject or changes its meaning.

Another important feature of activity which is rarely given any attention is its impersonal character. Activity is impersonal in the sense that it does not depend on who the person is who performs it. The sequence of operations and the choice of means are determined by the goal and the objective conditions of activity, rather than the subject's personal characteristics. One should also bear in mind that in addition to the subject's actions the structure of activity includes objective natural processes. In order to turn on a light in a room you just have to flick a switch, thereby starting a process which ends with the bulb lighting up. Therefore activity which is directed towards a certain goal will be carried out by any person in the same manner. It is this independence of activity from any particular subject that we call activity's impersonality.

A result is the outcome of an activity. The result is not always distinguishable from the goal although they are clearly different things. Activity is a combination of two aspects, the internal and the external. The goal, the analysis of various conditions, the framework of actions and the choice of means all belong to the ideal side of activity. The physical activeness of the subject, the interaction of the means of activity with the object of activity, as well as the objective processes making up activity and the activity's result form the external side of activity. The goal and result of activity lie on different planes and therefore cannot be identical. Sometimes this point is ignored and activity is defined

as "goal-oriented" activeness. But conforming to a goal is equivalent to leading to a goal. One may decide therefore that any activity is successful because it leads to a goal. But we know only too well that our activity often ends in failure or leads to consequences we never expected. Therefore, it is preferable to describe activity as a "goal-directed" activeness: activity is always directed towards the achievement of a certain goal although the goal is not always reached. At the same time activity culminates in a certain result, even if no one wanted or planned this result. One may recall what happened when uncle Podger from Jerome K. Jerome's book "Three Men in a Boat" was hanging a picture on a wall. He made a lot of fuss in the house, threw his entire family and servants into confusion and worked frenetically for half a day. The outcome of all this commotion was broken glass, a cut finger, a few holes in the wall and a badly hung picture, not to mention a few bumps and bruises. All this was the result of an activity, albeit not the intended result.

If the end result (one of the results) of activity coincides (to a certain extent) with the set goal, we shall call this activity rational; if the result of activity fails to coincide with the goal, the activity may be called irrational. The coincidence of the result with the goal shows that our actions were really "goal-oriented" or "goal- conforming," which means that our analysis of the situation and the plan we adopted for achieving the goal are true. If the goal set is achievable in principle, then there must be a realistic way — a sequence of actions, a set of means or objective processes — of achieving this goal (possibly, there are even more ways than one). The achievement of the goal testifies to our ideal plan of activity being an adequate reflection of one of the possible realistic ways of getting to the goal. An activity's rationality is based on true knowledge. If an activity proved irrational, one may conclude that it rested on false premises.

When we speak of activity, we shall thus bear in mind its goal-directed character, the presence of a preliminary ideal framework, its complex structure, its impersonal nature and its ability to be rational or irrational.

When speaking of behaviour, philosophers and even psychologists rarely consider man. To them behaviour is something that is mostly typical of animals and at some time in the past served as a basis for the evolvement of activity. According to ethology, the science of higher animals' behaviour, the behaviour of animals is based on instincts. The instinctive behaviour of animals, as opposed to the conscious activity of human beings, is not a means of achieving a certain planned and previously thought out goal but rather a reaction to a definite situation or even more so to a key stimulus that is an element of the situation. The reaction of an animal to the key stimulus is automatic in character: once such a stimulus has appeared, the reaction will perforce follow.

Is there anything in human activeness that might resemble animal behaviour? Philosophers acknowledge that human activity developed on the basis of biological behaviour, but with the appearance of con-

sciousness and goal-setting this behaviour turned into activity. Instincts were replaced by consciousness, and the entire activeness of man became activity, with the exception, perhaps, of unconditional, i.e. reflex movements. "In modern psychology, human behaviour is treated as activity that has natural prerequisites but, basically, is socially conditioned; the typical form of activity is labour."[3] Thus, behaviour has no place in human activeness; any manifestation of activeness which is accompanied by consciousness is activity.

However, the essential features of activity mentioned above and the enormous variety of deeds of human activity suggest that in no way has every manifestation of human activeness the essential characteristics of activity. Even if involuntary, automatic and reflex movements of all kinds are left aside, there will still be no problem in finding cases where activeness was indeed accompanied by consciousness but had none of the major features of activity.

Can we describe taking off your hat and kissing the hand of a lady you meet as activity? Is it activity when, seething with indignation, a person exclaims: "I challenge you!", or slaps somebody in the face? This kind of activity is more reminiscent of animal behaviour than human activity. Possibly, it would be appropriate to describe this activity as behaviour. What then are the characteristic features of human behaviour that make it a special kind of activeness different from activity?

What strikes us first of all is that, in contrast to activity, behaviour is not goal-directed or subordinated to a goal set in advance. Therefore, there is no analysis here of conditions, no preparation of an ideal plan of actions and no foresight — in short, there is none of the reasoning which precedes and accompanies activity. This is obviously so when a mother who cannot swim plunges into the water to save her drowning child or when someone who has never used a rifle before, goes off into the forest and starts shooting thoughtlessly at crows and jackdaws. We explain such cases by saying: "He didn't think!", "He got angry!" or "He got carried away," etc.

Man's behaviour is situational in the sense that it is a reaction to a situation, and in this respect is reminiscent of the behaviour of animals. One situation causes mirth, another forces a person to fight, a third makes him run to another person's aid, etc. Of course, activity depends on the situation to a certain extent, but it can control the situation and restructure it, because activity is inspired by a goal and organized in conformity with it. Behaviour has no goal and is therefore motivated by a situation. Criminalists give particular attention to this circumstance because, as they say, the situation is a necessary pre-condition for criminal behaviour.[4] It is hardly necessary to dwell on the fact that the behaviour of man, just like the behaviour of animals, is a reaction to certain key stimuli rather than to the situation as a whole. Man's reciprocal behavioural reaction to the impact of these stimuli is as spontaneously

and irresistably forceful as that of a wasp stinging a honeybee or a condenser discharging to a closed circuit.

Perhaps the most important specific feature of behaviour as compared to activity is that behaviour has a personal character, i.e. it is specific for each individual. Even the behaviour of animals is not only determined by the situation but by its inner condition as well. This is even more true of man. The situation stimulates behaviour, but what it will be depends on the individual. An animal has a set of instincts and a predisposition to this or another kind of behaviour. With man, the socio-psychological structure of the individual is a substitute for instincts. All the intrinsic features that form, in their totality, the inimitable individuality which distinguishes one person from another, determine the content and form of a person's behavioural reactions.

This means that it is precisely in the behaviour of an individual that his personality is revealed, and that by observing the way a person behaves we can understand with whom we are dealing. As Tatyana, from Pushkin's poem "Eugene Onegin," was looking wistfully at the notes Onegin had made on the pages of the books he read, she gradually penetrated into the inner world of her romantic hero:

> "And now Tatyana, thanks to Heaven
> Began to grasp by slow degrees
> The mind of him whom fate had destined
> By its immutable decrees
> She was to love."[5]

Every person has his own, unique "manner" of behaviour, just as each person has his own unique world of intrinsic values.

And, finally, it follows directly from this that while a person's activity may vary — he may be a carpenter today, a seaman tomorrow, and, say, a department head on another day, the behaviour of that person remains the same. The structure and the content of activity are determined by a goal; therefore, the subject's new goal entails a new activity. Behaviour, in its turn, is determined by the inner nucleus of a person, and to the extent to which this nucleus remains immutable the unity of a person's behaviour is preserved. Of course, the content and form of a subject's acts of behaviour will vary in different situations because behavioural reaction must be adequate for the situation. However, these acts will follow a certain pattern moulded from a person's inner, spiritual features; all these acts will, therefore, be manifestations of one and the same behavioural pattern — that of a cunning person or a simple one, someone who is kind or evil, bright or dull, moral or immoral.

It would be wonderful, of course, if the deeds of activity and behaviour existed side by side and could be easily distinguished one from the other, i.e. this one here is activity and that one there is behaviour. Then the implicit division of labour between philosophers, psychologists and sociologists, on the one hand, and the representatives of ethics and jurisprudence, on the other, would be "ontologically" justified, so to

speak. The former usually analyse deeds of activity and speak of goals, means, operations, and results; the latter attempt to understand behavioural acts and describe them in their own terms — action, act, deed, crime, etc. In any deed of human activeness, however, activity and behaviour are so closely intertwined that it is extremely hard to separate one from the other; moreover, one may show that they are inseparably linked together.

Human activeness performs two major functions: first, as it affects and transforms the surrounding world, it serves as a means of meeting the material and spiritual requirements of the individual; second, it is a means of expressing and developing a person's knowledge, skills and abilities. Both functions are merged together in every deed of human activeness. We build houses, grow wheat, make clothes and launch missiles into outer space. As we change and adapt the outer world to our needs, we simultaneously, during this process, reveal our tastes and inclinations, our perceptions of the world and our attitudes to it. Therefore every product of our activeness has the personal imprint of an individual belonging to a particular historical era, of a representative of a particular culture. The first of the two functions of activeness listed above is performed by activity, and the second, by behaviour. Activity and behaviour are not isolated acts, but two sides of a single entity, the activeness of man. As we know, linguists distinguish language (langue), a system of interrelated concepts (symbols) which functions and develops in accordance with certain laws, and speech (parole) — the use of language by individuals in specific situations. In order to be understandable, speech must be structured in accordance with the general laws of language, but, along with this, it always has an individual character and expresses the specific characteristics of the language user. This is the reason we speak differently even when speaking in the same language. The use of a language and its rules is an activity upon which the speaker's behaviour is superimposed, thus giving rise to speech.

We may now say that the activeness in which activity and behaviour merge is creativity. Perhaps this assertion will seem unusual at first glance, or even strange, for the term "creativity" is more often used to describe the creation of something new, something that never existed before, e.g. the development of a theory, the writing of a novel, the painting of a picture, the designing of an apparatus or mechanism, etc. There doesn't seem to be any creativity in the acts of approaching a person and shaking his hand, or cutting firewood. However, the divergence between the common understanding of creativity and the one expressed here is only a seeming one and, given more thought, disappears.

The activeness we are discussing always creates something new and unusual. The element of activity in this activeness influences people, things, and situations; the behavioural side imparts a personal, unique aspect to this influence. Every time you shake somebody's hand, cut firewood or walk down a street, you are thereby responsible for a unique

event for it is you who is shaking the hand, and nobody else can do it quite like you; it is you who is cutting firewood, and nobody else can do it in the same way. The entire chain of your acts or actions bears the imprint of your individuality, and it is as novel and unique in this world as your personality. You fashion your life by your own activeness — was there or will there ever be another life like yours? And that which we are accustomed to calling "new" is only a tiny fraction of the daily, hourly creativity of life. The development of a new theory is only a part of the creative work of Copernicus or Newton, Einstein or Bohr; a new novel is only a small part of the creative work of Tolstoy or Dostoevski; a new technical device is an infinitesimal part of the creative life of Edison or Tesla. We say: a part or a small part, because all these people made friends, loved, served terms of imprisonment or tilled land — in short, like many others they created their own lives and, at the same time, the fibre of social life we call history. And this, of course, is much greater than the individual results of their activeness which earned international acclaim.

If creative activeness definitely requires a personality, then a personality is also in need of such activeness. Creativity is a personality's modus vivendi: it is only through creativity that a personality comes into existence, and a lack of creativity means a lack of personality. Is this not an overstatement? Don't we know of cases where extremely capable and brilliant people never accomplished anything and failed, for various reasons, to express themselves in creative work? To say that "He/she has a personality, but he/she failed to express it in a creative manner" is probably wrong. If a person has a personality then it simply has to be creatively expressed, because if it is not we would not be able to say that the person has a personality. If we know that someone has an original, outstanding personality, this means that the person has somehow shown his worth and revealed his originality and outstanding qualities. A brilliant personality manifests itself in everything: in a person's gait, speech, and ways of communicating and dealing with other people, etc. In fact, the entire daily life of a person is a creative process because an individual, unique life is created in the course of it. If a person failed to achieve any tangible results which received the recognition of the general public, then it is a mere accident, the consequence of historical circumstances. No one will deny that Socrates' life and death were creations of a deep and strong personality, even though he never wrote any philosophical works. And is it not generally the case that a life which has been lived in accordance with one's own principles, tastes and wishes is in itself the most significant contribution a person can make to the life and development of society? If a person does not create his own life and does not express his deepest feelings in his actions and deeds, then what sort of personality has he or she?

Unfortunately, all this may only be true in the world of idealized objects that we have gradually created with our definitions. At this level

of analysis it is easy to state that activity and behaviour are inseparably linked together, that creativity is necessarily inherent in every human being, that while being engaged in one or another activity a person simultaneously reveals the specific features of his personality, etc. But all this is true and elementary only in relation to someone who lives in the ideal world of abstractions or on an uninhabited island. Real people, as we know, live and operate within a certain social structure and within a system of definite social relations. So what is the situation with regard to activity, behaviour and creativity in our socialist society?

First of all, one can easily see that activity in the sphere of industrial production — the largest and most important area of the national economy — is far from being a simple, complete and easy to observe process as we imagined it would be in our abstract analyses. The effect of the differentiation of labour processes and specialised production on industrial activity was that here it is not the individual who sets the goal, not the individual who plans the targets and the sequence of operations, not the individual who chooses the ways and means, and, naturally, it is not the individual to whom the result belongs. The individual usually carries out one operation out of tens of hundreds, without having, as a rule, the slightest idea of the place it occupies in the general structure of activity or of its ultimate purpose. Let's take, for instance, the construction of a modern aircraft. This process involves dozens of factories where various units, instruments and mechanisms are manufactured; thousands of people, including engineers, technicians and workmen are involved, with each of them performing only a very small part of this enormous activity which is ultimately embodied in the end product. The employees of a company that makes turbines for aircraft engines may be unaware of the ultimate product of their work.

But if an individual does not set himself a goal, does not choose the means of achieving it and does not plan the sequence of operations towards it, if all this is done for him, then it follows that the individual is not a doer. The building of an aeroplane, a car, a house or a railway is of course activity, but it is not the activity of a separate individual. Neither the engineer who prepares the blueprints, nor the workman who uses them for his job are doers themselves. In this case the doer is collective — the personnel of a work shop, a plant or an industry, and, ultimately, the state, which, via its planning agencies and government departments, carries out activity on an enormously large scale. The state sets the goals, chooses the means and owns what results from them. In relation to such complex types of activity, the individual proves to be simply a means, one of many, used for achieving the result. The individual's personality and the distinctive character and originality that it may introduce to the performance of operations are therefore unnecessary to activity. Moreover, they may hinder the activity's smooth and efficient course. We have noted that activity is a rational machine whose structure depends on its aim, and is therefore impersonal. While

we were discussing the individual's activeness, it was also pointed out that such activity is an abstraction and that the actual activity of a specific individual is always linked to behaviour and therefore contains a personal element. But activity which involves thousands of people and whose subject is the state, is just such an incarnate abstraction, because the individual characteristics of the people included in the activity are completely eliminated in its process. The individual, therefore, also participates in the activity as a kind of abstraction, because his potential is only used to perform a few functions, functions for which he can easily be replaced by some other individual.

This leads to the conclusion that labour in the sphere of modern industrial production is far from being a creative activity. The activity in which the individual is involved does not allow the peculiarities of his personality to be revealed. It is obvious that such labour cannot be motivated by an individual's inner need; it has a forced character. A person is forced to work in order to earn and buy goods and services he needs for his life. The uncreative character of labour, the transformation of the individual into a means of activity, and his loss of the opportunity for self-fulfilment during the process of labour — all this gives rise to a number of negative phenomena in our society: indifference to the process of labour and its outcome; the transformation of remuneration for labour into the goal of activity; the development of a money-grubbing and hoarding mentality, etc. The essential condition for eliminating these negative phenomena and for making labour a person's vital necessity is to change labour in such a way that it could again become a creative activity, and man, the doer.

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Chapter 5

THE CATEGORIC CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITY APPROACH

By V.N. Sagatovsky

The majority of Soviet philosophers dealing with the problems of human activity unanimously agree that a Marxist analysis of problems concerning the theory of cognition, the formation and development of man and other fields of philosophical knowledge is impossible without relying on activity as an explanatory principle. The description, explanation and projection of various objects to be philosophically considered from the point of view of the category of activity was given the name of the **activity approach.**

Until recently, however, the content of the category of activity was not subjected to an *ad hoc* analysis. In our view, this may be explained in two possible ways. The first is by a situation which is typical for philosophy as a whole: the terms taken from the common language (who doesn't know what is meant by activity?!) are supposed to be self-explanatory. As a result of this approach — and we shall attempt to show it by examples below — terms such as "activity" and "activity approach" are often used indiscriminately. The second way is by assuming that activity is a psychological concept rather than a philosophical category; it is assumed that it is more appropriate for Marxist philosophers to use the term "praxis."

The last assumption is incorrect for two reasons. First, it is obvious to any person who is familiar with Soviet psychology that any idea of our psychologists that concerns activity is most directly substantiated by appropriate theses from Marx. Second, the concepts of activity and praxis as used by the classics and throughout the history of philosophy as a whole, are semantically different.

If we proceed from the thesis that the activity approach is a methodological reality, has its categoric specifics and relates to the essential characteristics of Marxist philosophy, then the explanation of the concepts that reveal the nature of this approach should be viewed as a highly responsible task. These concepts may be divided into two groups: an external conceptual environment, or a categoric **context** in which the specifics of the activity approach are revealed, and the set of categories, or a system of concepts making up the contents and

serving as the categoric instruments of this approach.

We shall focus on the analysis of the categoric context and outline only the principles of the set of categories. The purpose of this analysis is to help eliminate the above mentioned circumstances which prevented philosophers from viewing activity as a special — and fundamental — philosophical category. In order to explain the adequate categoric meanings of the terms "activity" and "activity approach" we shall use a method which may be termed as the **method of categorical oppositions.** It essentially consists of the successive comparison of the concept under examination with those concepts to which it is usually opposed, and of the comparative analysis of the meanings and the heuristic possibilities of the oppositions thus established. The logic of this method is as follows: if you believe that the activity approach is a specific methodological reality and that it actually performs some fundamental functions in Marxist philosophy, then it cannot be like this but can be like that and only like that. In this way we shall reveal, as is hoped, the true categoric meaning of this approach and then be able to compare the concept of activity with that of praxis.

First it should be noted that there is a rather widespread understanding of activity as some kind of dynamic process, the opposite of static **relations** (and in this case it is said that relations are the condition and the result of the process of activity).

Of course this use of the word is fully justified in a certain context (incidentally, an adequate grasp of the context is, as we strongly believe, one of the key attributes of an intellect). But what is it that is specific to the term "activity" as compared to other terms? Its meaning in this case is fully covered by the meanings of the terms "process" (regarding object - object relations) or "action" (regarding subject - object relations).[1] If activity is interpreted in that way then the originality, the fundamental significance and the explanatory force of the principle of activity become entirely incomprehensible. What should this principle assert in this case? The primacy of dynamics over statics? But then it is a specific case of the correlation between movement and rest, and nothing more. Or is it the interdetermination of actions and relations in which they are carried out and summed up? But this is a long-established truism.

Secondly, activity as externally observed actions is opposed to **consciousness** as an inner programme controlling these actions.

This opposition makes sense in a certain interval of abstraction. The phrase "activity **and** consciousness" is justified when and only when what is meant is either previous activity or, on the contrary, consciousness influencing the given activity but formed within the framework of some other activity. However, there can be no activity at any given moment without its immanent consciousness or without a controlling programme. Outside the above-mentioned interval the opposition of activity to consciousness can clearly have only one meaning — what is implied is not activity in general, but only one

types or one of the subsystems of the integral system of activity, namely, **executing** activity or, to be more exact, actions and operations to carry out a programme built by consciousness.

It is hardly justifiable to understand the principle of activity as the assertion of the absolute primacy of executing actions in relation to the programme being executed: that way of thinking leads to behaviourism.

There is a well-known story of the replies given by three workers carrying bricks in wheelbarrows to a passer-by who asked them what they were doing. "Can't you see," said the first worker, "I'm carrying bricks?" "Earning daily bread for my family," the second man replied. And the third worker said: "I'm building a cathedral." Were they engaged in one and the same activity? Or were those three different activities manifested in identical actions? And if we reduce activity to executing actions, then it makes you wonder what the meaning is of that very popular dictum: "In the beginning was the Word." Does this meaning lie in the fact that carrying bricks shapes a man by itself regardless of the **vital sense,** the **key value** behind it? If materialism is understood that way, let any epithets such as vulgar, technocratic or behaviourist be attached to it, but not dialectic.

Thirdly, activity as externally observed activeness[2] is opposed to externally observed passiveness or **non-action.**

For example, A.P. Ogurtsov believes that activity has turned into a cultural specimen only in the bourgeois culture of Western Europe. In his view, other cultures had different standards: spiritual emancipation in ancient India, non-action in Taoism, contemplation in ancient times, etc. But according to this reasoning activity is reduced to rational enterprise or to the business drive of the bourgeois. True, the author himself fails to keep to his own terminology when he observes in the same article: "The cultural specimen of ancient times was contemplation interpreted as. . . self-sufficing activity."[3]

Of course, no one can prevent us from understanding "within the family circle" an active man as an enterprising personality always "in high gear." In this sense Kant, to say nothing of Diogenes, was undoubtedly inactive and passive. But if we want to use this term in a universal categorical sense, activity directed inwards and manifested externally as refraining from action may appear no less intensive (in the sense of inner spontaneity), and culturally and personally significant.

Consequently, activity characterises any form of subject- object relations, regardless of the vector of direction, of the fact where the object is situated, inside or outside the subject (that is, the object can be the person himself, his inner life, and the finding of ways to refrain from non-optimal external manifestations, etc.).

However, two questions arise here which testify that the sign expressing subject-object (S < – – > O) opposition is necessary, but nevertheless is **sufficient** for revealing the essence of activity. The questions are these: Does activity extend to subject-object (S < – > S) relations?

Can there be a breakthrough beyond the opposition of the subject and the object?

We shall discuss the first question a little later. As for the second one, we are inclined to answer it in the affirmative. Yes, the essence of man is expressed in activity, but is not reduced to it. Within limits a changeover is possible to such a state of consciousness when the identity of the subject and the object is revealed to a certain extent, continuality is reduced practically to the zero of intermittence,[4] and a **subjectless emotional experience** (we must emphasize that it is not absolute, but within a certain interval) becomes an opposition to activity. In no way do we have to turn to nirvana or Neoplatonic ecstasy to find an interpretation of this possibility. It is sufficient, for example, to recall the specific tendencies of aesthetic assimilation such as entrance into an image, subjection to the logic of images, the multiple interpretation of the symbol, etc.

Fourthly, the next important step in revealing the nature of activity is made in opposing it as an expression of the activeness[5] of the inner vital **meanings** of the subject to an objective natural historical process in which the subject poses only as one of its elements.[6]

The vital meanings or key values of the subject (society, the group, the individual) answer the question **in whose name** this activity is carried out. They can be described as the sort of goals (supreme goals) which are not means in the given system and which carry out the function of the **ultimate reason for the selection** of those objects, means and methods which in fact form integral activity. They constitute system-forming principles in relation to activity.

However, they, for their part, also have a basis both in the subject and in the objective reality that gave rise to it in the final analysis. In relation to the subject its vital meanings are the axiological, value expression ("fully-fledged representation") of its **essential forces,** that is, those integrative qualities of social wholeness which are necessary and sufficient for the expression of its essential specifics. But both the essential forces and vital meanings stem from certain **objective** social conditions. However, having been brought to life by the preceding natural historical process (which materialises only through activity), they acquire relative independence in the subject and influence the course and materialisation of the subsequent stages of the natural historical process through the activity in which they are embodied.

We ought to understand clearly the difference in emphasis in the following two sentences: a natural historical process constitutes objective conditions without which there can be neither the formation nor the activity of a subject (the natural historical approach); a natural historical process constitutes conditions in which the subject embodies his values and his vital meanings through his activity (the activity approach).

The universality and heuristic significance of the activity approach

manifests itself vividly within the framework of this opposition (between the activity of a subject and an objective process). This approach characterises any manifestations of the life of society. The fear of "excessive" community or of abstraction will disappear if we emphasize that these manifestations appear precisely in that aspect, in that objective interval in which they are determined by the meanings already formed, the key values of the subject (society, groups of people) expressing its essential strength.

But this is not enough either. The point is that this understanding of activity is sometimes extended **only to the S < – – > O relationships,** and in this fifth case there emerges the activity (as the S < – – > O relationships) - communication (S < – – > S relationships) opposition.[7]

This understanding of activity again deprives the activity approach of its universality and of the status of essential feature of the social form of movement. And if only S < – – > O activity is declared the basis of human existence, communication falls into disgrace, becoming something secondary and absolutely derivative. This is not the case. Communication (not in the narrow sense meaning an exchange of information by individuals, but on a categorical level like any S < – – > S relationships) is one of the essential features of human life and there can be no human integrity without it.

Nor can we agree to reduce activity to a type of S < – – > O relationship — to transforming activity or to labour. And this in no way belittles the role of the last of these in the philo- and ontogenesis of man. Genetically, every aspect and type of human activity constitutes the unfolding of interaction between labour and communication. But in its most undeveloped form this transformation includes both cognition and value-orientational activity (otherwise it will be only "instinctive" and not yet human labour). Besides, labour itself also poses as activity, and not as a sum total of actions and operations, only when certain vital meanings (the values of a useful effect or self-expression) materialise in it.

Activity characterises the **entire** system in the aspect of the manifestation of the essential features of man.[8] It is only on this condition that the characteristics of activity as "a mode of man's existence"[9] and "the human way of looking at the world"[10] acquire their true significance. Given this understanding the activity approach can indeed become a methodological basis for comprehending cognition in the context of socio-cultural life and for solving many urgent theoretical and practical problems.

And, finally, a word about the correlation of the ideas of "activity" and "practice." It is not difficult to choose contexts where activity and practice are used as synonyms or even where activity, practice and sensory-object-related transformation (material production) are one and the same thing. The polysemy of such terms is inevitable, but it cannot serve

as an argument when their categorical meanings are clarified without taking into account the context in which one or another term has been used. It is not difficult to show, for instance, that the phrase "sensuous human activity, practice" in the context of the first thesis on Feuerbach is quite justified by the context of the polemics: Feuerbach recognises only "the theoretical attitude"[11] (consequently, in this text Marx no longer fully identifies activity and practice) while the object, reality, and sensuousness are taken only in the form of an object. As for Marx, he suggests viewing the object subjectively, through activity and, of course, first of all (since what it comes down to is exchanging the object for the subject) through labour and object-related practice. Practice here is taken within the framework of this opposition: "practice, sensory-object-related-theory, comprehensible."

We have no opportunity here for using extensively the method of categorical oppositions in relation to the idea of practice. That is why we shall limit ourselves to considering a context directly related to our task of distinguishing activity from practice. This is the third thesis on Feuerbach: "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as **revolutionary practice."**[12]

It is clear that revolutionary practice — just like scientific practice, for example — cannot be reduced to its sensory-object-related type.[13] The essence of the **category** of practice lies in the fact that it contains the unity of the objective and the subjective, the natural historical process (the course of events) and activity, and discharges the function of **mediating** activity and expressing the meanings and purpose of the subject and the law-governed pattern of objective reality. This is where the Marxist understanding of practice differs from the pragmatic one, and this is precisely why practice can serve as a criterion for truth and a measure of the extent to which the activity of the subject successfully "fits in" with the objective world which is independent of it.

Consequently, activity is the subjective moment of practice. The natural historical process is its objective moment. Practice is their synthesis in which the objective process takes place in accordance with its laws, while the subject realises its vital meanings. This synthesis is historical, it is in a state of development and each of its moments registers the degree that the subject has mastered objective reality (the ideal of activity) on the one hand, and the degree to which activity "fits in with" the law-governed world of objectivity (the requirement of the natural historical process) on the other.

1. On the difference between the notions of activity as an integral system of actions and operations, on the one hand, and actions and operations as elements of this system on the other see A.N. Leontiev, Activity, Consciousness and Personality, Prentice Hall, Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1978.
2. In this case activity is understood as a measure of movement and not as a characteristic of inner spontaneity.

3. Ogurtsov A.P. Ot printsipa k paradigme deyatelnosti Ergonomika (From the Principle to the Paradigm of Activity/Ergonomics), Trudy VNIITE, Moscow, 1976, No. 10, p. 194.
4. Nalimov V.V. Nepreryvnost protiv diskretnosti v yazyke i myshlenii Bessoznatelnoye: priroda, funktsii, metody issledovaniya (Continuity Against Discreteness in the Language and Thinking/ The Unconscious: Nature, Functions, Methods of Study), Tbilisi, 1978, v. 3, p. 286-292.
5. Here activeness is understood as inner spontaneity.
6. On the opposition of the activity and natural historical approaches see Kelle V. Z., Kovalzon M. Y. Teoriya i istoriya (Theory and History), Moscow, 1981.
7. See, for example, B.F. Lomov's polemics on the insufficiency of the activity approach for understanding human integrity when activity is reduced to an S < - - > O relationship as in the concept: B.F. Lomov. Obshcheniye kak problema obshchey Metodologicheskiye problemy sotsialnoy psikhologii (Communication as a Problem of General Psychology Methodological Problems of Social Psychology), Moscow, 1975. As a result, B.F. Lomov arrives at the formula: "Activity and communication."
8. It is important to bear in mind that when it comes to S — O and S — S relationships, the latter term is understood not in the sense of static relations (as the conditions for and the result of activity), but also includes dynamics, that is, the relationship poses as a manifestation of the subject's position in life and his objective status.
9. See Kagan M.S. Chelovecheskaya deyatelnost (Human activity), Moscow, 1974, p. 5.
10. See Shvyrev V.S. Zadachi razrabotki kategorii deyatelnosti kak teoreticheskogo ponyatiya Ergonomika (Problems of elaborating the category of activity as a theoretical notion Ergonomics), Trudy VNIITE, Moscow, 1976, No. 10, p. 75.
11. Karl Marx. Theses on Feuerbach. In: K. Marx & F. Engels. The German Ideology. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, p. 645.
12. Ibid., p.646.
13. "...in practice, which serves us as a criterion in the theory of knowledge, we must include also the practice of astronomical observations, discoveries, etc." V.I. Lenin, Coll. Works, Vol. 14, p. 140.

Chapter 6

THE PLACE OF THE CATEGORY OF ACTIVITY IN THE THEORETICAL SYSTEM OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

By Y.K. Pletnikov

The general philosophical and socio-philosophical studies of the past few years have put a spotlight on the problems of activity both as a philosophical principle and as a specific philosophical category. In connection with this there also emerges the cognitive task of determining the place of the category of activity in the theoretical system of historical materialism. Without claiming to make an exhaustive examination of the subject, let us concentrate on two problems: the solution of the principal problem of philosophy in relation to the life of society and the merger of the principle of the unity of the world and the principle of development in historical materialism.

The building of Marxist philosophy as a scientific system also called for a new approach to the solution of the main problem of philosophy. Both pre-Marxist and non-Marxist philosophies in one way or another found and continue to find this solution from ideological premises, although the latter, as a rule, cannot be found on the surface of philosophical reflection. The connection between philosophy and ideology or, speaking in broader terms, between the world view and ideology, is deep-rooted. However, ideological premises alone are insufficient for solving the main problem of philosophy in a scientific manner.

The scientific solution to the main problem of philosophy can be found directly from the principle of the unity of the world, and not from ideological premises. In his polemics with E. Duhring F. Engels underlined that the real unity of the world was in its material nature, "...and this is proved not by a few juggled phrases, but by a long and wearisome development of philosophy and natural science."[1] And the development of social science also plays an important role in supplying this proof.

To substantiate the principle of the unity of the world in relation to the life of society, it is necessary first of all to make clear what the specific features of social or, in other words, historical reality are (these ideas

are synonymous in this case). What is the essence of these features? In juxtaposition to natural reality what is specific about historical reality is that it is a subject-object reality, the only possible mode of existence and development of which is human activity. Hence all the social processes without exception necessarily presuppose interaction between the objective and the subjective.[2] People and their vital and subjectified activity stand behind even the object-object links of historical reality, for example, the link between the economic basis and the superstructure. K. Marx saw the failure to understand this as the main shortcoming of all materialism that had gone before, which considered objects, reality and sensuousness only in the form of an object and not like human sensuous activity and practice, i.e. not subjectively. "Hence," Marx observed, "in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism — which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such."[3]

These are indeed those hard facts which we have to deal with first in explaining the specific features of historical reality. However, when these specifics are registered, this alone does not yet supply a scientific solution to the main problem of philosophy. The materialistic understanding of history begins when something which does not depend on the consciousness and will of the people has been found in historical reality. In other words, to substantiate the materialistic understanding of history it is necessary to clarify the nature of social materiality.

Marx solves this problem by a thorough examination of human activity, describing labour as positive creative activity, characterizing it as, first of all, a process taking place between man and nature in which man mediates, regulates, and controls his exchange of substances with nature through his own activity. Specifying the subject of his study step by step, Marx goes on to reveal the role played in the historical process by people's material-production activity, i.e. labour.

The most important result of this research, which sets Marx's position apart in principle from that of classical bourgeois economists, was the proof of the dual nature of labour contained in the product, the differentiation of labour objectified in vital material means into concrete and abstract. This discovery explained the specifics of social materiality and answered the question about what the social substance and the inner basis of all social phenomena was. Although social substance is inseparable from the material-substantial substratum of society, its crystals are not objects of nature themselves transformed by man, but socially necessary and impersonal labour, which is abstract in this sense and invisibly present in their forms changed by man. According to Marx, "...this itself is only an imaginary, that is to say, a purely social mode of existence of the commodity which has nothing to do with its corporeal reality."[4]

People consciously transform objects of nature and consciously create material means of living. However, the social substance, in all its links

and relations, does not depend on their will or consciousness. It is historically determined by only one thing, the productivity of social labour which, for its part, characterises the progress achieved by the productive forces of society.

In "Capital" Marx interprets social substance as the substance of value. But does this mean that value is the only manifestation of social substance? Certainly not. Value is a historically transient phenomenon and is inseparable from commodity production. Social substance is an historical process, the social form of the movement of matter as a whole. One cannot but quote Marx here that the "value' of a commodity is only a certain historical form of something existing in all social forms."[5] That "something" is none other than social substance as distinct from the material-substantial substratum of society. This problem is still waiting to be researched. Among other things, we must explain tendencies in the changes of the nature of the social properties of the product of labour in the course of socialist construction.

Social substance is the only objective equivalent of the economics of social labour and the exchange of human activity. Together with this exchange it is included in the process of production of material means of being and in the genesis of material (production) social relationships. It is the nature of social substance which determines the fact that primary social connections or, to be more exact, material social relationships, can be formed without passing through the consciousness and will of people. Without dwelling specifically on the description of social relationships, let us only emphasize the following: in our view, nowhere near all relationships in society have the status of social relationships. Firstly, social relationships are such social connections between group (anything up to society size) and individual subjects. If separated from the interconnected subjects a social relationship can obtain a specific embodiment, can itself be individualised, only through abstraction.[6] Secondly, their aggregate is reduced to material relations of production as the economic basis of society. Thirdly, social relationships constitute the public form of human labour, or human activity if we use a generic term. They turn people's practical activity into socio-historical practice linking activity and social relationships into a single whole and always constituting a concrete historical process.

Consequently, social relationships cannot be separated from human activity, although they cannot be equated unconditionally either. The indisputable methodological principle of cognising historical activity is not the opposite or the unconditional identification of activity and social relationships. It is the principle of their unity. That was precisely the way the founders of Marxism-Leninism formulated the correlation between activity and social relations. As K.Marx observed, "the social history of men is always the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not. Their material relations are the basis of all their relations. These material relations are only the

necessary forms in which their material and individual activity is realised."[7] Lenin, emphasising the same point, stated that "social relations are divided into material and ideological. The latter merely constitute a superstructure on the former, which take shape independent of the will and consciousness of man as (the result) the form of man's activity to maintain his existence."[8]

Today the interaction between practice and theory and, accordingly, the division of human activity into practical and theoretical constitutes one of the central problems of philosophical studies. In his "Theses on Feuerbach" Marx divided up both types of activity depending on the object of their application. Practical activity deals with material, i.e. really existing objects, while the theoretical one deals with conceived objects.[9] But are the conceived objects reduced to the forms of logical thinking without which there is not and cannot be theoretical activity? Evidently, they are not. Conceived objects can be artistic images created in works of art or an illusory form of reflecting reality such as religion. That is why, as a general rule, practical activity should evidently be opposed not to theoretical but to spiritual activity as a whole.

The practical and spiritual types of activity are far from being identical with the material and the ideal. Practical activity always poses as goal-setting practical activity, that is, it presupposes the ideal image of the desired future as its necessary component. Spiritual activity, for its part, is inseparable from a certain material and technical apparatus, i.e. books and libraries, archives, museums, the mass media, discussions and other practical forms of creative debate about problems which arise. In this connection, when we divide activity into practical and spiritual it is important to take into account the results of activity, as well as sensuous and conceived objects. While practical activity is aimed at transforming real phenomena, i.e. those existing outside the consciousness of human beings, spiritual activity deals with the change of their consciousness.

Both practical and spiritual types of activity form subsystems of activity as a whole and for their part are relatively independent systems. It would be expedient to divide spiritual activity into three main types: cognitive activity (the correct or illusory reflection of reality, including theoretical reflection), prognostic activity (the reflection of reality in the sense of its possible changes) and value-orientation activity (the reflection of reality in the sense of values, of what has positive significance for the subject and corresponds to his ideals and world view). As for practical activity, its division into two main types has won extensive recognition. These are material-production activity (changing nature) and socially transforming activity (changing society).

When they acquire independent significance and even pose as opposites (brought about by private ownership), the practical and spiritual types of activity always supplement each other in real historical process. They reveal themselves in the course of history also in such specific

combinations as were described by Marx as the practical-spiritual mastering of the world.[10] What does this mean? The problem still needs looking into. One thing, however, is clear. When Marx distinguishes theoretical mastering of the world from artistic and religious mastering, he means the different methods of ideally reflecting reality, while the practical-spiritual mastering of the world goes beyond the framework of the reflective process. In its wholeness it somehow links the transformation of consciousness with that of external reality.

As we see it, spiritual production nowadays poses as the practical-spiritual mastering of the world in a particularly vivid manner. Besides institutional and practical-organisational ways of realising itself, it also requires a considerable material and technical basis. This includes experimental equipment, material provision for preparing and conducting experiments (without which the development of science is impossible), and industrial facilities for the production and consumption of the artistic media, i.e. the cinema, television, etc. It seems that the problem of educative and teaching activity could also be considered as part of the study of the practical-spiritual ways of mastering the world. This activity is not confined to the shaping of a certain type of human consciousness. The problem is formulated in a much broader sense. What is also meant is the shaping of a certain style and stereotype of human behaviour, that is the goal-directed change of the phenomena of historical reality.

The problem of the practical-spiritual mastering of the world is now more pressing than ever before. It is now one of the focal points of the growth of philosophical knowledge. Having emphasized this, let us, however, now return to the subject of our analysis. Let us, to start with, do some summing up. The study of human activity is important for proving the unity of the world, discovering the nature of social materiality and the origin of material social relationships, and thus arriving at a scientific solution to the main problem of philosophy as applied to the life of society and attesting to the fact that social existence is primary and social consciousness is secondary. But it is here that the second question we have put forward arises.

The main thing is to combine the principle of the material unity of the world with the principle of development, the logic equivalent of which in the theoretical reproduction of reality is the method of ascending from cognition of the abstract to that of the concrete. The implementation of this method requires, for its part, finding the "cell" of the object of study and thus determining the start of a theoretical analysis.

Specialists working in the field of historical materialism have been discussing the problems under review a great deal in recent years. However, what is bad about it is the lightweightedness of some of the reasoning. It is society, man, material production, etc. that are declared the "cell" of social life. This is done without any serious argumentation, sometimes simply to make this point of view known. Yet the problem

should be solved in a conceptual way, proceeding from clearly formulated criteria. And such criteria are available: they are formulated in Marx's "Capital" and Lenin's "Philosophical Notebooks."

Firstly, the "cell" of social life should be an elementary formation, i.e. one which cannot be divided up any further in the social sense. Secondly, it should be a continuously repeating, masslike phenomenon, that is a phenomenon directly and sensually perceived by man. Thirdly, it should contain all the social contradictions in undeveloped form.

The formation of social life corresponding to the above-mentioned criteria emerges, in our view, only in one case — when activity undergoes a transformation from motion into an object without motion,[11] in other words, when we have the objectified result of human labour, its real product. It is the product of human labour taken as such, separately from the rest of the social formations, that constitutes the unique "cell" of social life, an elementary formation which cannot be divided further into some independent components of the social system.

So what is it that transforms the product of human labour into an elementary formation of social life? There can only be one answer — it is the labour itself, or to use a generic term, human activity itself. It is from here that the category of activity marks the start of the ascent of social cognition from the abstract to the concrete and the building of the theoretical system of historical materialism as a relatively independent socio-philosophical and general sociological science. Such a beginning makes it possible to understand the nature of social materiality and the origin of material social relationships in a thorough and well-argumented manner, and approach the inherent characteristics of social existence and consciousness as the basic categories of historical materialism.

Besides such categories as "activity," "labour," "social practice" and "practical-spiritual mastering of the world," research into the problems of activity naturally includes categories reflecting the universal principles and factors of human activity into the theoretical system of historical materialism. This includes the categories of "need," "interest," "value," "goal," "means," "result," etc. The question also arises of the correlation between human activity and the natural historical process of society's development. It has now become a subject of discussion. In our view, the two are inseparable. The natural historical process of society's development depends not on people's will and consciousness, but on their activity. No matter how subjectively aloof man might keep from the conditions of his life, he has to conform to them objectively. Hence the activity of men (or to be more exact, of classes and masses) must in the final analysis acquire the features of a lawful natural historical process.

As distinct from the laws of nature, the laws of society reveal themselves only in and through the activity of men. Such are the specifics of historical reality and the characteristic traits of its existence.

But this approach (let us call it ontological) should not be confused with an epistemological one. Men learn the laws of society and use them in their practical activity.

It is in this and only in this epistemological sense that the laws of society become separated, as it were, from the practical activity of men, and both the natural historical process and human activity can be regarded here as relatively independent characteristics of historical reality. But they should be viewed not as two aspects of historical reality and thus as two aspects of the theory of historical materialism (in all its aspects history is nothing but the activity of humans pursuing their aims),[12] but as two theoretical levels of historical materialism. The development of society as the activity of humans constitutes the essence of the former while the development of society as a natural historical process is the essence of the latter, and this is more profound. With this approach there arises the problem of integrating these levels of theoretical reflection of historical reality, which is expressed in a direct manner in the interpretation of the historical process as the social form of the movement of matter. It is important to note that the notion of the social form of the movement of matter has no epistemological significance. It does not raise or solve the main problem of philosophy. It equally reflects social existence and social consciousness in which the subject-object-related specifics of historical reality and human activity as a means of its existence and development also reveal themselves.

1. Frederick Engels. Anti-Duhring. Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, p. 65.
2. See Marxist Leninist Theory of the Historical Process. The Historical Process: Reality, the Material Basis, the Primary, and Secondary. Moscow, 1981, p. 95-96.
3. K. Marx. Theses on Feuerbach. In: K. Marx & F. Engels. The German Ideology. p. 645.
4. K. Marx. Theories of Surplus-Value Part I. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 171.
5. K. Marx & F. Engels. Works, Vol.19, p. 391 (in Russian).
6. Karl Marx, Frederick Engels. Coll. Works. Vol. 28, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986, p. 80.
7. K. Marx, F. Engels. Selected Correspondence. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p. 31.
8. V.I. Lenin. Coll. Works, Vol. 1, p. 151.
9. See K. Marx. Theses on Feuerbach. In: K. Marx & F. Engels. The German Ideology. p. 645.
10. See K. Marx & F. Engels. Coll. Works, Vol.28, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986, p. 38-39.
11. Karl Marx. Capital, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 184.
12. K. Marx, F. Engels. Coll. Works, Vol. 4, . . . p. 93.

Chapter 7

ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

By V. Z. Kelle

The problem of activity has many sides to it, and it is being examined in our philosophical literature along different lines. Here we are interested in its formulation and solution within the framework of the materialistic understanding of history (historical materialism). The analysis of activity within this framework is of general philosophical importance, because it is historical materialism that is required to give a materialistic interpretation to the very idea of activity and bring out its methodological significance as a means of explaining and a way of approaching the study of reality. But this analysis is also concerned with the inner requirements of historical materialism, since activity is within its province and it is important for it to clarify the place of this notion in the system of categories of this science.

The problem of activity gradually appeared in works on historical materialism. As far back as the '50s the category of activity as such was not singled out as a specific category of historical materialism. Most of the ideas used in historico-materialistic literature expressed individual types of activity such as labour, the class struggle, the activity of the masses and the individual in history, etc. Evidently, this should be seen as a shortcoming both when studying and expounding historical materialism since there is a whole series of problems a methodological analysis of which can be made only if we proceed from activity understood as an independent category.

Indeed, mental and physical work, political and organisational management activity, and scientific, artistic, and technical creative endeavour are all concrete forms and types of activity as a generic term. But if we want to analyse the mode of man's existence as an active creature, we shall need precisely this generic understanding of activity comparable in its generality with such fundamental categories of historical materialism as social existence, social consciousness, social law, etc. It is not always possible or sufficiently correct to make such a comparison using more specific terms expressing and characterising various types of activity. That is why the inclusion of activity in the number of categories of historical materialism has enriched the latter

and expanded the horizons of its theoretical vision.

The problems of activity came into philosophical literature of the '60s along with a growing interest in questions linked with the theme of man and the correlation between the individual and society. Man is a problem that "runs through" the whole of our philosophy. Describing man as an active being, philosophy thereby includes the problem of activity into the subject of its special analysis.

Consequently, the idea of activity in the system of the categories of historical materialism opens up a whole new area of theoretical analysis for it. All this has not only purely academic importance, but also meets practical needs in sorting out the problems of raising the labour and social activity of men and the conscious utilisation of the objective laws of social development.

In activity the material and the ideal, the objective and the subjective, find themselves in an unbreakable, organic unity. Activity has an objective side since it includes man in the interaction with the external world. It is subjective because it expresses his (man's) own activeness. But if we remove one of those sides, the other will also disappear. They can only exist together. We may object to this by saying that there exists, firstly, material practice and, secondly, spiritual activity where this unity is not observed. This is not so, however. Practice is also activity, the unity of the material and the ideal, but in this case its material-transforming principle is separated from object-related activity, signifying the active inclusion of the subject with his interests, needs and aims in interaction with objective reality. As for activity in the ideal sense, objective factors in this case serve as a reflection and as determinants the subject is obliged to take account of, otherwise the products of his activity will not have any social importance. Its significance lies in the fact that in the final analysis it is called upon to service real activity.

But if activity is the unity of the material and the ideal, then we cannot solve the main problem of philosophy which proceeds from this assumption. When this problem is meant to apply to society, Marxism has the categories of social being and social consciousness for its solution, i.e. where the material and the spiritual are opposed to each other. This opposition implies a rigidly unequivocal recognition of the primacy of being and the secondary nature of consciousness. As Lenin pointed out, their opposition is true within "those limits which define the **trend** of epistemological investigations. To operate beyond these limits with the antithesis of matter and mind, physical and mental, as though they were absolute opposites, would be a great mistake."[1] As applied to the problem under review, this fundamental provision signifies that it is necessary to approach the analysis of activity from the position of the materialistic solution to the main problem of philosophy determining the **trend** of this analysis. It is only then that it becomes clear that, although men are guided by their consciousness in their actions, their

consciousness itself depends on the material conditions of activity. Therefore one should look for material reasons behind the ideal motives of the activity of men.

So what conclusions follow from this discourse for determining the place of the category of activity in historical materialism? This question did not prove so simple at all, a debate started around it and different points of view emerged.

First of all, it would be fair to say that the category of activity, "having burst" into historical materialism, began to gain more and more ground, and it became fashionable to tackle the problem of activity. The number of books written on the subject increased rapidly. There emerged and rapidly became widespread the "activity approach" absolutised by some authors to such an extent that they actually began to use it instead of historical materialism.

What is necessary is to have a clear-cut idea of the facts that the materialistic trend in research is not set by the category of activity itself and that this category acquires its methodological and heuristic possibilities only when considered in the system of categories of historical materialism. That is why there is no scientific foundation whatsoever for snatching the category of activity out of this system and opposing the activity approach to the historico-materialistic one. It is a different story though when it comes to the activity approach **within the framework** of historical materialism as one of its cognitive principles having both its own possibilities and limits. In this form it has a legitimate right to exist.

The interpretation of activity as the initial category of historical materialism, as the substance of social life, as the cause of its own self, etc. is a less obvious exaggeration, but an exaggeration nevertheless. The idea of activity cannot determine the materialistic trend in the study of society because, proceeding from activity, one can follow the path of either materialism or idealism. That is precisely why activity cannot be the **initial** category of historical materialism. Nor is activity the substance of social life or the cause of its own self, because in order to exist it needs certain conditions and means, a system of relationships, and simply the outside world. It is well known that labour is the father of wealth, but nature is its mother. The crux of the matter is that in all these cases activity is taken abstractly outside a certain system of social relations.

Let us turn to Marx for the sake of clarity. He makes a profound analysis of labour as people's material production activity, aimed at maintaining their existence. Labour links man materially with nature and adapts the matter of nature to human needs. Labour activity raised man above the rest of nature and enabled him to stand out. But — and this should be emphasized — Marx makes production and not labour the **initial** notion of the materialistic understanding of history. Why? In what way does the notion of "production" differ from that of "labour"?

First of all, the difference lies in the fact that production is labour activity, but taken within a system of social relationships, that is, in this case, material relations of production. They impart concrete social properties to the labour activity of men and the subject of labour itself. They determine the nature of incentives to labour. They constitute a basis for working out social laws whereby productive forces develop and the processes of labour take place. To speak of activity outside social relationships of production means to talk about some activity which has no concrete social qualitative definity.

Sociality is imparted precisely by the system of social relations which exist inactivity but, of course, cannot be identified with it. Historical materialism begins not with the realisation of the fact that labour is necessary for the existence of society and not even with the definition of man as a social being. Historical materialism begins with the discovery of the fact that there exist such social relationships which put men in a **necessary** relationship with one another while taking shape regardless of their will and consciousness as the unforeseen result of activity aimed at sustaining their life. That is why the basic ideas in the materialistic understanding of history are not labour, or activity by itself, but precisely production and the mode of production as the unity of productive forces and the relations of production. The principle of activity is of fundamental importance for understanding this, but it "works" as a scientific provision only in the system of internally interconnected categories of historical materialism.

What does it all mean and what is its significance for the methodology of social cognition?

We often quote a well-known dictum saying that history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims. And the conclusion can immediately be drawn that one must not abstract oneself from activity either in the methodology of social cognition or in various social sciences and that whoever does abstract himself nevertheless inevitably descends into naturalism, objectivism and other sins. Of course, both naturalism and objectivism are incompatible with the materialistic understanding of history, and it is necessary to fight against both of them. But those who, when studying the life of society identify any abstraction from activity with naturalism and objectivism are also in error. What is more, in a number of cases the methodology of historical materialism requires such abstraction and does it precisely in order to cognise activity itself more profoundly and approach its study in the correct manner. The question of whether one should or should not abstract oneself from activity in social cognition should be decided by proceeding not from some apriori taboos, but from the nature of the cognitive problem to be solved.

There are known cases in history of scholars who did not abstract themselves from activity and yet fell into subjectivism, voluntarism and fatalism. But it would be absurd to conclude from this that one should not be guided by the principle of activity in solving many problems of

social cognition. For example, in historical science the principle of activity plays an enormous role, because this science studies the activity of men in history whereas the science of economics puts a spotlight on production relations in the given society and not on activity. But so far we are interested in historical materialism. So what is its task?

If we assume that history is the result of the activity of men, the first task of historical materialism is to work out methodological approaches making it possible to find a way of explaining why men make history in one way and not another, that is, to discover the laws of social development and reveal its objective determinants. We shall not make any progress in carrying out this task if we repeat the word "activity" over and over again. What is intended is to work out a system of ideas which make it possible to approach the analysis of this activity scientifically. To do so it is necessary to consider activity itself in a broad social context, which is what historical materialism has been doing all along. It proceeds from the principles of the materialistic approach to the analysis of society and, consequently, activity, because the subject with his activity cannot be removed from society as the object of social cognition. It is impossible to eliminate the subject, because man is the maker of history. But to determine the objective trend of this creative effort and thus to explain why men make history in one way and not another, historical materialism had to single out the general, the repeating and the lawful, i.e. to abstract itself from the diversity of history and concrete activity and to understand the dynamics of society as a lawful natural historical process. As a result, the key was found to the understanding of the activity of men in history. It could be said, of course, that it is the activity of men which stands behind all these categories. However, this adds nothing new in terms of theory to the solution of the **given** cognitive problem since that was implied by definition. But when this basis is singled out, we already have the necessary theoretical and methodological prerequisites for the scientific analysis of activity, which carries out objective laws (or slows down their implementation) and produces the concrete and diversified picture of a real historical process.

This approach reflects the specifics of the object of social cognition, but there are also some general scientific foundations of the analysis which make it possible to illustrate the idea with a very simple example on the basis of analogy.

The movement of bodies in space — mechanical motion — is the subject of classical mechanics, that is, it requires an explanation. To provide this, it was necessary (let us omit philosophical prerequisites) to define such terms as mass, force, inertia, acceleration etc., discover laws governing this movement and establish quantitative dependences, i.e. to create a set of powerful scientific instruments. And the movement is not an initial category here, although the question of abstraction from it is not raised at all.

Undoubtedly, social relationships and structures exist in the people's

activity, but in the cognition of social life there exist cognitive situations where it is necessary to abstract oneself from activity.

There was a great deal of argument at one time in our literature, mainly economic, about the basis functions of the socialist state. Some people tried to prove that the socialist state, by planning and organising production, thereby enters into the economic foundation of socialism to become an element of that foundation. Others (mainly lawyers) objected to this and continued to refer the state entirely to the superstructure. However, the direct juxtaposition of these two views will never resolve the disputes, because there are sound arguments on both sides. A solution can be supplied only by a methodology which distinguishes the structural and activity approaches in historical materialism from one another.

Why indeed did some economists reach a conclusion about the basis functions of the socialist state? Evidently, the reason is that by seeking to gain a better understanding of the growing economic role of the state as a planning and organising body they identified the economic activity of the socialist state in the sphere of production with the functioning of the economic basis as a system of objective relations and thus confused the two. In fact, if the state becomes an element of the economic basis, the objective foundations with which it is supposed to co-ordinate its activity in the economic field disappear and the state itself becomes such a basis. And this provision opens the door wide to complete voluntarism and subjectivism.

The state and its elements cannot be included in the basis. Structurally the state fully belongs to the super-structure. Production, the basis, the superstructure, social existence and consciousness are the structural cross-section of society which makes it possible to reveal dependences between its structural elements from the point of view of materialism where the primary and the secondary must be strictly distinguished. But the knowledge of all these dependencies is vital if the study of activity being carried out in the different spheres of social life is not to become entangled in the multiplicity of structures and relationships in the activity of any of these spheres. For in production as a sphere of activity there are not only basic economic relationships, but also legal, moral, organisational, socio-psychological and other relationships (although a structural analysis of production highlights **only** productive forces and the production relationships in it), and the state, discharging its economic functions, faces the sum total of them in real life. For example, can it manage without legal norms, regulations and laws in its economic activity? That is why the fact that the state operates in the sphere of production does not in any way mean that it can become an element of the basis even partially. The state also pursues a certain cultural policy, but that does not mean that it becomes an element of culture.

Activity has the role not only of an object of analysis, but also of a

means of explanation regarding the part played by the subjective factor, the conscious improvement of social relationships and the consideration of the human source of activity. The main thing is not so much to urge people to work better, as to place them objectively in such relationships with one another so that they might be encouraged to do their best for society. The conditions themselves should make them do so. This of course does not imply some kind of tough regimentation. On the contrary, socialism cannot develop successfully without stimulating the activity and initiative of the mass of the people or without asserting democratic principles in every sphere of the life of society. What it means is radical revolutionary restructuring of the economic, social and political mechanisms.

1. V.I. Lenin. Coll. Works, Vol. 14, p. 246.

Chapter 8

ACTIVITY-LABOUR-CULTURE

By N.S. Zlobin

The "problems of activity" have become widespread in various branches of scientific knowledge in recent decades. The same is also true of popular science and publicist literature. Besides the undoubted positive effects of this development, it has led, as it often happens, to the erosion of the essential meaning of activity as a philosophical category and the reduction of it to the level of a concrete scientific or even household term. What is more — and this situation is also rather widespread — activity is "returned" to philosophy in this "eroded" state under the guise of the "activity approach," while losing the very same methodological significance which was the reason for its becoming widespread. As a reaction to that there are views maintaining that the concept of activity is only a tribute to philosophical fashion and that it is difficult to find a place for the idea of activity in the categorical system of Marxist philosophy in general and in historical materialism in particular.

Therefore it seems to us that the philosophical analysis of the problem of activity presupposes "cleaning up" this idea of extraphilosophical strata, which in no way means ignoring the real conditions for the manifestation of various forms of activity in different concrete historical contexts. On the contrary, it helps us to work out a methodological basis for research into them.

Activity as a methodological principle (the principle of activity) serves as a means of discovering the specifics of the social forms of the movement of matter, the mode of man's existence. This mode consists of the fact that man does not simply adapt to the world, but rather changes it in accordance with his needs and interests, that is, creates his own socially conditioned human world, including the world of his own relationships — i.e. social reality. Consequently, man here acts as a subject. And it is this subject characteristic of man that the principle of activity concentrates on. It is in this way that it is discovered that man also acts as the subject of his own development as a social being, and as a subject of history in the process of material, object- transforming interaction with nature. Or, in other words, in the way that the development of society as a natural historical process at the same time presents itself as a cultural-historical process.

That is why it seems to us that the "extra-activity" approach to the analysis of history inevitably turns out to be one-sided and limited while the categorical structure of historical materialism organically includes the category of activity characterising the specifics of man's attitude to the world as a subject attitude. Man's activity attitude to reality signifies that he himself, by his object-practical activity determines the aims and trends in the development of reality, acting as a goal-setting subject.

On the most general level, that of understanding activity as an expression of man's specific attitude to the world and as the process of conscious and deliberate transformation of reality by man, it may seem that the idea of "activity" has no independent meaning of its own. For there are such ideas as "labour," "production," "consciousness" and "goal." However, the problem is quite complex because, firstly, the world is infinite, secondly, the world, including the sphere of social relationships, exists and develops according to objective laws independent of the will and consciousness of men, and thirdly, man himself is only a very local, finite and, in a sense, chance element of this world. So what remains for man as a goal-setting subject?

It is from this twist of the problem that the temptation arises to switch it over to the common meanings and to limit it to an object-result examination, which is consolidated by the concrete scientific use of "activity" terminology. In this situation man acts only as the subject of actions with regard to natural objects used by him to create (manufacture) products (results) to satisfy his needs. The point is, however, that the subject characteristics of man's attitude to reality as his social attitude, having some properties of universality, remain outside the field of vision if the functional approach is adopted.

In fact, the transformation of the substance of nature to suit the aims of man characterises labour, even if it is viewed in its most "simple and abstract forms," as a "direct labour process." However, the content of the goal and the process of setting it are outside such an examination, and that is why the subject characteristics of man and his actions are limited to the form of the result. The goal can be set for an individual by external factors, alien and even hostile to him. And then the goal-directed actions of the individual and, consequently, he himself act only as a means of achieving the result set by an external aim.

Of course, an individual directly engaged in a labour process must accept the goal and use it as an instrument in his actions in choosing ways of achieving the result. In this sense and within these limits he acts as the subject while the goal assumes the significance of a law determining the nature of his actions and subordinating his will. However, the participation of the given individual in setting the goal has only a limited function. Consequently, he acts as the subject of activity, but only as the subject of the system of goal- directed and goal-oriented actions to achieve the previously assigned result. The above-mentioned limited ability of actions to achieve the goal makes it impossible to

discover the source of the goal and, consequently, to lay it open as the basis of activity.

To clarify this situation leading to the formal identity of the goal and the result, let us turn again to the abstract diagram of the labour process. Its result is the consumer value, the object definity of which is formed as the goal of consumption, as the image of a product satisfying a need. And it attains its final completeness in the consumption of the product. That is why "the process disappears in the product."[1] In other words, the goal set externally to the process of labour cannot serve as a source of development by itself because it directs this process only toward the reproduction of object. The product of consumption is limited in advance by the already developed need and its special nature.

Of course, as Marx emphasizes, a satisfied need creates conditions for resuming reproduction because "consumption reproduces the need."[2] But this fact itself does not represent the necessity of development directly.

Neither the process of labour (the system of goal-oriented actions) nor its result contain the source of a new goal. The same can be said about the goal of labour following on from the process of exchange (which makes it possible to resume production thanks to the product). Translating this possibility into reality signifies renewal, the reproduction of the **already realised** goal. The organisation of production, although acting as an organisation of individuals consciously carrying out activity and determining their social connections, does not imply the development of these connections by themselves. Nor does it constitute a historical process.

History can be understood only as the development of the real individuals themselves. And it is precisely this development that is eliminated in the objectivised, already worked out methods of transforming the substance of nature. That is why these methods, by being reproduced, thereby become mandatory, i.e. acquire the significance of a natural necessity contrary to their social nature. And the fact that in this case man acts deliberately and knows what he is going to do changes nothing in this sense. The realisation of the need does not eliminate its external nature, which is obligatory in relation to the individual, or the subordination of his will to the expediency imposed on him by that necessity.

Consequently, in consumption-oriented labour man does not act as a goal-setting subject. The formulation itself of a goal is not the moment of a goal-setting. On the contrary, it means only setting external limits on the process, external because the methods of attaining a goal cannot, by definition, be represented in the process of goal-setting. It is impossible to find out the source of new goals, or the source of development either in these methods or in the local result obtained on their basis. To visualise the complex mechanisms whereby man appropriates the substance of nature not in isolation, but in interconnection with them,

it is necessary to consider all those functional forms not merely as the structural elements of goal-oriented and goal-directed actions to achieve one or another local result, but in the content of an activity attitude, as moments, just the **moments of integral activity.**

Activity considered as a philosophical category has an attribute of integrity by definition and thus cannot be represented by a system of goal-oriented actions or broken up into separate actions, behavioural acts, etc. The integrity of activity is ensured by the fact that the goal and the result are represented in it not as a formal, abstract identity, but as a dialectical unity realised by the subject in the process of formulating and setting a goal, i.e. in the process of **goal-setting.**

Furthermore it is goal-setting that is the determining feature of activity as a methodological principle of Marxist philosophy in analysing the social actions of an individual. The essence of this principle is formulated in the following way: "History is **nothing but** the activity of man pursuing his aims."[3] In view of this the activity of an individual is not reduced to merely the performance of various social roles determined by the existing social system independently of him. This does not mean, of course, denying the social determinability of his activity. However, society is viewed through its historical development, the subject of which is man himself. Moreover activity is a social act of man which he performs as the subject of the cultural-historical process, the specific characteristic of which is active, conscious and creative influence on the objective world.

It is this influence, the **creation** of the human world by man that constitutes the essence of culture. And it is in this cultural and activity-based essence that the social determination of an individual reveals itself with full force because it is in this that his social nature manifests itself to its full extent. By his object-transforming activity the individual not only carries out functions determined by the social system, but also creates his own social relationships and himself. It means that his object-transforming activity cannot be fully expressed through its object-related results and thus reduced to a sum or even a system of separate actions, although it is realised through them. It cannot be deduced from the utilitarian-pragmatic interconnection of man with the objective consumption-oriented world around him because the essence of activity is not in consumption, but in **creation.** Man's activity link with nature consists not merely of subordinating it to his goals, but in **setting his goals** to nature, in **goal-setting.**

Goal-setting means going beyond limits determined by natural necessity as well as overcoming the limitation of the already known, discovered and, in this sense, established connections of the object. It so to speak implies the involvement or the "pulling" of the object into new interconnections determined by the goals of man's development and, consequently, reconstructing the object itself and changing its structure and essence in accordance with these goals. This is the

discovery of the activity-based unity between man and nature and, at the same time, the formation of this unity because by considering himself and his development as a link connecting natural objects, man acts as a system-forming element of "historical nature." Consequently, activity as production and the creation of the human world by man presents itself as the process of universalising man's attitude to the world and at the same time the formation of the integrity of man himself as the subject of the historical development of this world.

There emerges a certain contradiction here: on the one hand, being a product of social development, man can formulate a goal only by proceeding from historical experience accumulated by cultural tradition. The knowledge of the world, representing this experience, which has been given the value of universal definitions, poses to an individual as universalities having no relation to man and belonging to natural objects as such (exhausting them). On the other hand, achieving the goal set in activity requires going beyond the boundaries of the established general definitions, developing connections which are not yet covered by this experience (i.e. not defined). That is why man finds himself in a state of uncertainty during the process of goal-setting because the new interconnections of the object are also new to him.

The setting of a goal as part of activity is not a wilful act of the subject with regard to the object, which has a measure of its own. And the goal itself and the actions of the subject to realise it should be correlated with the object and made commensurate with it. In other words, the result foreseen in the goal poses here as **problem,** the resolution of which takes place as the development of man himself, his taking shape as a subject capable of understanding the measure of the object and acting in accordance with this measure.

This development cannot be ensured by the available set of results of social experience. Of necessity it signifies expanding, deepening and developing experience, its transition from the result-object form to the form of activity and its **deobjectification** (which is a mechanism for the formation of the individual's ability to use previous experience for working out methods of its development). The definitions expressing this experience (ideas, formulas, laws, etc.) thus become "open" to the inclusion of new interconnections because they are "divorced" from the object, i.e. become demarcated from it. This "divorce" shows that the data of available experience do not cover the whole of the object, that is to say, indicates that the object has not been exhausted in previous experience. (In its most general form this is expressed in the Marxist-Leninist theory of the inexhaustibility of matter).

For the individual, in whose activity these universal results of previous experience become deobjectified, the object becomes something to be adopted (the discovery of its hitherto unknown properties, qualities, etc.) while the experience itself turns into a prerequisite and material for this adoption. It means that the universal definitions (ideas, formulas, laws,

etc.) in which the goal is set act not as a superindividual programme determining the individual's premeditated actions for attaining a result, but as the shaping of an individual by society — his own ability to be a subject and to develop mankind's experience in the process of attaining the goal. Consequently, on the one hand, the accumulated social experience "loses" its universal value with regard to the object (the objective world), as it were, in deobjectification in view of the apparent incompleteness of the data contained in it. On the other hand, however, the individual becomes, as it were, universalised in this process and develops as a subject because the formation of his abilities poses as the working-out of methods of using previous experience for mastering the hitherto unknown properties, qualities, aspects, etc. of the objective world and including them in the human world (culture).

Consequently, goal-setting as part of activity signifies the formation of the universality of man himself who sets the development of his own social essence as the universal goal of the transformation of nature. That is why man formulates the goal not in the image of an object which satisfies a requirement, but in that of the foreseeable result of creative activity. And already at the stage of the image this result is turned to the formation of the subject of activity, from the subject of activity to another subject, and therefore "burdened" with a relationship to the latter and with its future goal. In other words, it poses as the problem of creating new abilities for the individual, the development of his social and activity-based value and, in the final analysis, of society itself. In other words, the development of new abilities becomes a basis from which man can learn more about the objective world. And that, in its turn, broadens the horizons for the application of human effort. That is why the result of activity, far from disappearing in consumption, serves as an impetus for the further unravelling of the contents of the goal, i.e. goal-setting.

Man's labour, examined in the context of activity, presents itself in a quality other than that of the mere production of use or exchange values: as the fulfilment of the activity-based creative potentials of man and as the real existence of culture. Moreover, in this case consumption is not limited to the object-result forms of the product or its appropriation (or assimilation) either, but turns out to be the content **mastering** of the human essential forces embodied in the product.

An analysis of the object-transforming activity of man requires three different but, of course, interdependent aspects in the examination of labour:

1. **Empiric-concrete** — labour in its simple and abstract definitions as a socially mediated condition for the exchange of substances between man and nature — as the production of use value;

2. **Abstract-universal** — labour as the abstract form of discovering the social nature of this exchange of substances (as a "congelation" of abstract human labour)[4] — as the production of exchange value;

3. **Content-universal** — labour as the socially significant activity of man achieved in concrete historical terms and aimed at the taming of the world around him, as his self-assertion in this world and as positive, creative activity[5] — independent activity.

It is clear that the examination of universal labour alone makes it possible to reveal the methodological significance of the principle of activity since: a) its characteristics fully describe the idea of activity as the realisation of the activity essence of man, the formation of his content unity with the world; b) in its composition man acts as a goal-setting subject and, consequently, as a subject of social goal-setting by virtue of his object-transforming activity.

As a matter of fact, man's sensual-practical interaction with the world can be understood only as socially significant creative endeavour in which the self-realisation of the individual in object-related activity acquires a universal cultural-historical meaning, as the creative effort of history and at the same time as the development (creation) of **man himself** as the subject of creative activity and the subject of the cultural historical process.

The credit for the discovery and theoretical substantiation of the cultural meaning of labour goes to K. Marx. Criticising Adam Smith, who reduced labour to "negative" definitions because he meant only the labour of "the slaves of capital," Marx underlined that as social antagonisms were overcome, the goals of labour would lose the "appearance of just an external, natural necessity to become goals the individual sets for himself, consequently, turning into self-implementation, the object-related embodiment of the subject, therefore, into real freedom, the active manifestation of which is precisely labour. . . ."[6]

K. Marx describes the work of a composer as an example of emancipated labour. This work is a "devilishly serious business, involving extremely great strain." Marx emphasizes that labour assumes such a character only where there are "subjective and objective conditions necessary for making labour attractive, so that it should be the self-realisation of the individual. . ."[7] When applied to labour in material production, it signifies "that 1) it has a social nature and 2) that this labour. . .constitutes universal labour. . . ."[8] When such conditions are absent, labour becomes the fulfilment of goals external to the individual who therefore acts "as a force of nature trained in a certain manner."[9] Bearing in mind how alienated labour is as a result of that circumstance, K. Marx and F. Engels observed that "the communist revolution directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labour."[10] What is meant, of course, is not the ceasing of man's labour activity, but, on the contrary, the fact that labour acquires a feature of activity adequate to its positive definition, i.e. universality. It will mean at the same time that human labour will be emancipated from the technologically organised system of goal oriented actions for the reproduction of the products of labour. The latter is a natural prerequisite and a necessary con-

dition for man's social existence, the realisation of his universal activity essence. However, it is only a condition and a prerequisite and therefore man's direct inclusion in this type of work is historically transient — it should occupy a place next to the production process.[11] The transformation of labour into the active manifestation of human freedom puts it "beyond the sphere of actual material production."[12]

It is important to emphasize here that "actual material production" as a sphere in which "labour dictated by necessity and external expediency" (the kingdom of natural necessity) is performed does not coincide with man's activity in production as a whole since the latter, as it is known, also implies the development of man's vital forces. That is why man's entrance into the "kingdom of freedom" signifies not his emancipation from object-transforming activity carried out in the course of production, but his release from precisely this sphere of actual material production, i.e. from the sphere where labour functions only as a result of compulsion, into that of direct and purposeful interaction between the instrument of labour and the object of labour which is increasingly transferred to the machine. This emancipation signifies that the labour of every individual will increasingly become universal labour, positive creative activity acting as the direct embodiment of culture.

This should not be taken to mean that in the pre-communist period of history labour had no cultural content at all or that man's activity essence was not realised in labour. The point is that this cultural and activity essence can be revealed only by means of the analysis of its developed forms which are the only ones making it possible to discover its manifestation at previous stages in "curtailed" form and, consequently, to clarify the ways and law-governed patterns of its "unravelling," emergence and development. Marx, in emphasizing that human labour always has a social content, which should be borne in mind on any level of abstraction, uses the idea of "activity" as applied to all aspects (including empirical-concrete and abstract labour) of its examination, but only in those cases when he mentions its development, i.e. when it goes beyond the limits set by the abstraction itself.

This approach embodies the interconnection between the logical and the historical. In **historical** reality the development of labour takes place in accordance with the law of the **negation of negation** — the transition from the simple utilisation of the substance of nature in which the actual cultural and activity-based characteristics of labour cannot yet be singled out of man's activity, to the alienation of labour and then to labour as the activity-based manifestation of freedom. **Logically** the analysis of this process is carried out as an **ascent from the abstract to the concrete,** from the simple and abstract definitions of labour as empirical object-related activity to abstract labour, in which this empirically concrete definiteness of activity is removed, and then, to the extended notion of labour as activity in which its content is filled with its concrete-universal, cultural, activity-based substance.

However, the logical examination of the development of labour becomes possible only when its historical development reaches a high level. That is why both activity and culture act in theoretical consciousness as a problem only in conditions of alienation when practically performed labour poses as the opposite to its actual human, activity-based content. In the context of the analysis of social production the activity-based characteristics of labour are expressed by the idea of "universal labour;" in the context of clarifying the specifics of human vital activity this role is played by the idea of "object-transforming creative activity" (or simply "activity" in the strictly notional sense); and in the context of the study of the historical process they are expressed by the idea of **"culture."** As we can see, in any case what is meant is the subject characteristics of man.

1. K. Marx. Capital, Vol .1, p. 176.
2. K. Marx, F. Engels. Coll. Works, Vol. 28, p. 29.
3. K. Marx, F. Engels. Coll.Works, Vol. 4, p. 93.
4. K. Marx. Capital, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 46.
5. K. Marx, F. Engels, Works, Vol. 46, Part 2, p. 113 (in Russian).
6. K. Marx, F. Engels. Works, Vol. 46, Part 2, p. 109-110 (in Russian).
7. Ibid., p. 110.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. K. Marx, F. Engels. The German Ideology, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, p. 85.
11. K. Marx, F. Engels. Works, Vol. 46, Part 2, p. 213 (in Russian).
12. K. Marx. Capital, Vol. III . . . p. 820.

Chapter 9

THE ACTIVITY OF THE SUBJECT AND PSYCHIC ACTIVITY

By A.V. Brushlinsky

Activity (initially always practical) performed on one or another level of **communication** is man's principal means of interaction with the world. Its subject is mankind as a whole, a contradictory inseparable unity of smaller-scale subjects, i.e. various social classes, groups, nations and individuals interacting with one another. In this sense every individual is a subject, but of course the subject is not reduced to an individual. At the same time it is only people and not animals or machines that can be subjects (man creates and uses ever more perfect machinery, but only as an instrument and means of his activity).

It is from this standpoint that Soviet psychology has systematically developed the methodological principle of the unity of consciousness (of psychics in general) and **activity** (the activity approach). The principal contribution to its successful development was made by S.L. Rubinstein (from 1922 onwards) and A.N. Leontiev (from the late 1930s onwards). The first formula of this principle, which holds good to this day, is as follows: "The subject not only reveals and manifests himself in his actions and in the acts of his independent creative activity; he is created and defined in them. That is why the things he does can be used to determine what he is; the direction of his activity can be used to determine and mould his character."[1] Thereby human psychics not only manifests itself, but also **is formulated** in activity (i.e. labour, academic, cognitive, game, etc.). Activity and psychics are not an aggregate of behavioural reactions (unlike behaviourism and neobehaviourism) and not the purely spontaneous ripening of a closed-off substance cut off from the outside world (unlike idealism, introspectionism, etc.). The psychic is the highest level of the **reflection** of reality and, accordingly, the highest level of the **self-regulation** of the entire life of man, his activity, communication, contemplation, etc.

Further research into activity-based problems continues first of all on the basis of the methodological principle of **communication** which is being developed by B.F. Lomov.[2] This principle sums up the more

substantial peculiarities of subject-subject interrelations (which are always connected, of course, with subject-object interactions).

One of the most promising fields in the study of the above-mentioned problem is, in our view, the revealing more and more substantially and clearly of the place and role of **psychic activity** inside the practical, theoretical, etc. **activity of the subject.** Since the term "activity" is used in both cases, it is important to bear in mind that it has two interconnected but different meanings: 1) the activity of the subject and 2) the activity of an organ. The second meaning may seem superfluous, but in fact it is very important for specifying the term "psychic activity": it is none other than the reflective activity of an **organ** (the brain) originating and taking shape in the course of the continuous interaction of the organism or of man with the world. It is common knowledge that the brain is only an organ of psychic, reflective activity; man is its subject. That is why any psychic activity — contrary to introspectionism — takes place only within and on the basis of practical, theoretical and other activity. At the same time psychic activity has a degree of **relative** autonomy (which is not usually sufficiently taken into account). Such is, for example, the psychic activity of dreams. Man as a conscious subject is reduced to the minimum, is almost totally absent (i.e. asleep) and cannot carry out practical or theoretical activity, but his psychic activity can proceed quite actively nevertheless. Its initial material is, of course, always made up of the subject's activity just before sleep because the two types of activity are not separate from each other. In general, all the instinctive levels of the psychic (like the unconscious) belong to psychic activity to a considerable degree in the above-mentioned sense of the world.

The unbreakable unity between the conscious and the unconscious in the course of the constantly changing interaction between the individual and the external world ensures the specific **continuity** of psychic activity. In this sense everything psychic acts objectively first and foremost as a process, always uninterrupted, live, extremely plastic and flexible, never fully assigned originally (not "programmed") and therefore forming and developing, and giving rise to various products (images, ideas, feelings, etc.) in the course of the interaction between man and the world. This continuity of the psychic as a process makes it substantially different to technical systems and mathematical structures. With the aid of dynamic interconnections all stages of the psychic process grow continuously out of each other and thus are not separated from one another ontologically, unlike the different cycles of machine functioning (the switching on, changing over or shutting-down of an engine, etc.) and unlike the elements of a mathematical set. Psychics is impossible to switch on or off — it functions continuously from the birth to the death of every individual. In this sense the uninterrupted nature of the psychic is **continually genetic** (non-disjunctive, non-dichotomic) which is insufficiently taken into account, as a rule, in

cybernetics, informatics, mathematics, etc. (e.g. in modelling psychics, building artificial intelligences, etc.).

The understanding of the specific continuity of psychic activity also makes it possible to bring out in a new way the above-mentioned relative autonomy of this activity compared with the practical and theoretical activity of a subject. The former always remains uninterrupted while the latter is interrupted at least during sleep. That is why the former (but not the latter) is a **process** in the strict sense of the word. Psychic activity is made concrete through the psychic as a process.

But, of course, despite the uninterrupted nature of the psychic it always has something about it which is interrupted as well. Any product or result (e.g. insight) of a psychic process is an interrupted component within an integral uninterrupted process. Consequently, psychics **is the unity of the uninterrupted** (process) and the **interrupted** (product, mental operations, etc.). It is important to take into account the fact that psychological understandings of the uninterrupted and the interrupted **differ** substantially from those in mathematics and technical science, and that as distinct from many other sciences the general philosophical idea of the unbreakable **unity** of the uninterrupted and the interrupted is consistently realised in psychology.

From our point of view, this basic point opens up hopeful prospects for the further separation of the truly psychological aspect from the philosophical-sociological problems of activity. The well-known pattern for the analysis of activity developed by S.L. Rubinstein and A.N. Leontiev already by the 1930s and '40s remains widespread in psychology and some of its kindred sciences to this day. According to that pattern, the following interconnected components can be singled out in the activity of the subject: goals, motives, actions, operations, etc. (Rubinstein also singled out deeds). This approach is necessary and productive in many respects, but — contrary to the view shared by most psychologists — still **insufficient** for actual psychological research. The point is that the subject, his activity and its components are studied not just by psychology, but also by philosophy, sociology, ethics, logic, physiology, etc. Consequently, psychology has to specify the object of its research more strictly, singling out the **specifically psychological** aspect of the subject, his activity and all its components. *The theory of the psychic as a process* developed by S.L. Rubinstein and his school is a necessary and significant milestone along this route.

For example, actions and operations as such are always already relatively formed more or less with regard to the definite and limited conditions of activity. In this sense they are **insufficiently** plastic and labile, something which is found in a new, changed situation when they become not quite adequate. Unlike actions and operations, psychic as a process is **fully** labile and plastic. In the course of his thought processes man gets closer and closer to pinpointing the concrete, constantly changing conditions of his activity, communication, etc. - conditions

that are always new in one way or another. Consequently, thinking as the uninterrupted process in the search for and the discovery of something substantially new is of primary importance and most labile with regard to the actions and operations which arise and develop in the shape of secondary and less plastic components as its forms only in the course of this process (and, consequently, it is in this capacity that they should be studied by psychology in the first place). Experiments made by B.O. Yesengaziyeva proved this most convincingly.

Consequently, in the **uninterrupted** process of thinking are formed **interrupted** mental actions and operations (logical, mathematical, linguistic, etc.). Any intellectual operation is interrupted in the sense that it does not contain sufficient **exhausting** indications related to the conditions of its formation and application; therefore, in using it, man must go beyond its boundaries. For example, a school-boy who has a good grasp of the mental exercises of addition, subtraction, etc. may experience great difficulties in solving one or another definite problem if he does not know how to analyse it in depth. That is why he will not understand where and how to apply those mental exercises in accordance with the fully specific conditions and requirements of the problem to be solved.

This is why any intellectual operation or system of such operations is formed not by itself, but merely in thinking as a live uninterrupted process (which is particularly important to take into account now in order to determine what the prospects are for computerising both academic work and labour). It is only in this broader processual context that it is possible to discover what particular mental actions and operations should be formulated, improved, used, and developed. Thinking is not reduced to a system of any of its operations. The **operational** aspect of thinking activity brought out in the studies of Z. Piazhe, P.Y. Galperin and others is necessary, but not sufficient for understanding the essence of thinking; it is part of a broader, **processual** context. Likewise the motives of any of the subject's activity are not **fully** or originally shaped in advance. They also take shape in the course of the psychic as a process. Among other things, M.I. Volovikova began to discover in her experiments this processuality of motives on the material of the psychology of thinking.

Consequently, all the components of the former pattern for breaking up activity (actions, operations, motives, etc.) assume a new, "more psychological" quality when they are being studied in their processuality. This also applies to the goal, which is not fully and wholly ready or set from the beginning. On the contrary, it is formed in the course of a psychic (especially thought) process.

Thinking as a **process** is inseparably linked to thinking as the **activity** of the subject and to the personality aspect (motivation, abilities, reflexion, etc.). And this is what always constitutes the non-disjunctive interconnection between the **personality** and **processual** aspects of

thinking. At any stage of psychic development man performs a thinking process on the basis of the already formed (and relatively stable) motives and abilities; their further formation takes place at every possible moment at every current and subsequent stage of thinking as a process. For example, specifically cognitive motivation appears precisely in the course of thinking as a process determining its further progress. The motives and goals of man as he thinks characterise this progress chiefly in the personality, i.e. activity aspect more than anything else. In other words, these are not two different order-forming planes (personality and activity) but one, because activity is performed only by a subject or, to be more specific, a person, although the personality is not reduced to such activity. The analysis, synthesis and generalizing of the unknown quantity, conditions and requirements of the problem to be solved by a person characterise his thinking mainly processually.

Thinking, perception, etc. as a **process** take place chiefly unconsciously and instinctively. However, on the level of the **personality**-activity aspect of thinking, perception etc., man regulates these processes consciously to a considerable extent with the aid of reflexion. Given the appropriate conditions, it depends precisely on the particular person or group of people, and on their arbitrary or volitional self-regulation whether they will perform the necessary cognitive activity, e.g. whether they are going to **solve** this or that problem. This conscious self-regulation is absolutely necessary, but it may not be sufficient nevertheless to **solve** the problem successfully. In the second case a great deal depends particularly on the quality and standard of thinking as a process and on its intuitive components, of which a person may hardly be aware and which lend themselves to conscious control only partially and in a very indirect and **mediated** fashion.

Consequently, activity (in this case cognitive activity) is performed by the doer, i.e. by man as a subject. In other words, it is man himself who thinks, it is not that somebody else puts his thoughts into him. However, that does not mean that the individual always straight away fully subordinates all the multifarious levels of his mind to direct conscious self-regulation. The latter is inevitably extremely systematic, that is, it has many planes and levels, and acts objectively in different capacities (as activities, as a process, etc.).

Usually, a distinction is made between practical (specially labour) and theoretical (specially cognitive) activity of the subject since the former, unlike the latter, creates material products and thus directly changes the material world. But, strictly speaking, there are not two, but **only** one activity of man because theoretical, cognitive activity is inseparable from the very beginning from primary, integral practical activity by its historical and ontogenetic origin and grows out of this activity only at a certain stage of development. Moreover, the products and results of cognitive activity are necessarily used at the current and subsequent stages of practical activity contributing to its further development. All

this should be borne in mind when we speak of thinking as the **activity** of the subject (in juxtaposition to thinking as a **process).**

To specify what has been said, let us correlate thinking and speech in this context. In our view, the latter, unlike the former, **cannot be activity** in the above-mentioned sense and that is why the widespread term "speech activity" (or "speech as activity") is not quite correct. Both the term and the idea were studied in particularly great detail at the junction of two substantially different approaches, the activity approach (of S.L. Rubinstein and A.N. Leontiev as we mentioned earlier) and the non-activity approach (of, among others, L.S. Vygotsky). According to the cultural-historical theory evolved by L.S. Vygotsky in the last years of his life, it is speech or to be more exact, speech and other cultural signs social in origin and thus distinguishing men from animals that serve as the "producing cause" (his own expression) of the child's psychic development. In other words, the **word-sign** here has the same fundamental importance for man's psychic development which is attributed to the **activity** of the subject (practical from the very beginning and, of course, linked with speech, communication, etc.) in the activity approach. But in the former case speech signs and symbols perform their fundamental role outside practical activity and irrespective of it.

In the course of his studies of speech and thinking, L.S. Vygotsky obtained a number of new and interesting results; however, on the whole his cultural-historical theory of higher psychological functions remained one-sided for the above-mentioned reasons. For example, the role of speech signals in the psychic development of the child became so exaggerated that even thinking was considered as a speech function (as before, outside adequate links with originally practical activity). In particular, in Vygotsky's opinion, egocentric speech "begins to fulfil the function of forming a plan for solving a problem arising in behaviour" and even "becomes thought in the actual sense of the word, that is, assumes the function of a planning operation, the solution of a new problem."[3] But if speech fulfills the function of planning and even that of solving problems, what is thought supposed to do?

In reality man solves problems not with the aid of speech as such, but with the aid of thought (which is of course inseparably linked with language and speech). It is common knowledge that speaking does not yet mean thinking, although it is impossible to think without speaking at all. Consequently, we should not make absolute the role of speech and attribute to it a function (thought) which does not belong to it. It was this **absolutisation of the role of speech signals** in the development of higher psychological functions that obscured from Vygotsky the fundamental importance of primary practical activity in forming human psychics. In his Psychological Dictionary (Moscow, 1931), co-written with B.Ye.Varshava, where his views are expressed in concise and precise form, there **is no** entry titled "Activity" at all (nor are there such entries as "Practice," "Labour," etc.), while in the entry titled "Marxist

psychology" he never once uses even the word "activity." Vygotsky's most consistent pupil A.R. Luria, who further developed his theory, in summing-up his scientific autobiography[4] pays no particular attention either to the category, the problem or the principle of activity. That is why he says nothing about the main works of Leontiev produced after he had begun to go over to the positions of the activity approach.[5]

Nevertheless, over the past ten years or so a number of psychologists and philosophers suddenly began to say that the problem of activity had been worked on and continued to be worked on now precisely along the lines of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. From our point of view, this means that what is viewed as activity (i.e. practical from the very beginning) is in fact its direct opposite. In other words, the basic principles of the entire activity approach are being revised and this tendency is becoming quite common. That is why in the course of our joint discussion of the principal aspects of the activity problem it would be worth while considering this question, too.

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2. B.F. Lomov. Metodologicheskiye i teoreticheskiye problemy psikhologii (Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Psychology) Moscow, 1984.
3. Vygotsky L.S. Coll. Works. Moscow, 1982, Vol. 2, p. 49, 108, etc. (in Russian).
4. A.R. Luria. Etapy Proidennogo Puti (Stages of the Traversed Path). Moscow, 1982.
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Chapter 10

ON THE PLACE OF THE CATEGORY OF ACTIVITY IN MODERN THEORETICAL PSYCHOLOGY

By V.V. Davydov

The category of activity singles out the features of the life of men consisting of the fact that they **purposefully transform** natural and social reality. The primary form of such transformation is the production of material tools used by men to make objects to satisfy their vital needs. Material production (labour) has a universal nature because in principle it can make any tools or objects. This type of production is carried out by men only in certain interconnections and relationships whose sum total forms their production or social relationships. In the course of the historical development of material production and social relationships spiritual production also emerged and acquired relative independence. But the main qualities of material production, such as its universally transforming and social nature are also retained in this form of labour.

The labour process is closely linked with the ideal notions (or images) of man enabling him to predict what type of product will be made. Notions as an inner image, and the need and goal, despite all their external differences, can be brought together in the single concept of **the ideal** as a means of **fixating** that side of man's activity which forestalls the production of a real object.

Man's activity is **conscious.** To explain such an idea as "consciousness," it is necessary to take into account the social nature of man's activity and the fact of its ideal existence. According to Marx, activity exists both in directly collective and in individual form when man acts, while being aware of himself as of a sociable and tribal being.[1] But the universality of collective, tribal activity can be represented in a particular individual because of the possibility of its ideal existence. "Man," Marx pointed out, "much as he may therefore be a **particular** individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real **individual** social being), is just as much the **totality** — the ideal

totality — the subjective existence of imagined and experienced society for itself."[2] The individual's ideal, subjective conception of his real social existence (and of his generic activity and the social relationships connected with it) is his consciousness.

Consequently, in Marxist-Leninist philosophy activity acts as a primary category determining the features of the social existence of man. At the same time the carrying out of activity implies the inclusion of the ideal and consciousness in it. Thus the study of activity, the ideal and consciousness should be made in their integrity and in their unbreakable ties with one another, with the determining role of activity as the objective process of the universal transformation of natural and social reality by sociable man.

The philosophical understanding of activity was made concrete in the **psychological** theory of activity which became a basis for the whole of the Soviet psychology. Different versions of the psychological theory of activity have now begun to emerge in Western countries. For example, one of them was evolved by the West Berlin psychologist K. Holzkamp.

At the same time the powerful armoury of Marxist Leninist ideas linked with the category of activity is still used insufficiently in our psychology. The same is true of the results of contemporary philosophical studies devoted to the problem of activity. This hampers progress in the experimental psychological studies of the activity and consciousness of man, as well as the further development of the relevant psychological theory. In a number of cases it has encouraged the emergence of views which, in our opinion, are far removed from the correct assessment of the role and place of the idea of activity in modern theoretical psychology.

The category of activity has become not only one of the fundamental ideas of dialectico-materialistic psychology, but also its principal idea, its universal "cell." If we make this basic idea concrete, we can construct a detailed psychological theory about the development of man's activity, consciousness and personality. That would correspond to the **monistic principle** of building a scientific theory whereby it should be revealed on an integral foundation, that of one universal idea, the understanding of activity in psychology.

However, some psychologists claim that what is being observed in our science is the absolutisation of one idea (or category), that psychology cannot develop successfully on the basis of just one idea (implying the idea of activity), and that it should be formulated on a basis of ideas which cannot be reduced to one another. It should be emphasized that a number of philosophical and interdisciplinary ideas, which are also basic ideas for psychology, are of particular importance for this science. These include the notions of reflection, consciousness, social relationships, activity, communication and personality.[3]

The listed categories are of course fundamental to Soviet psychology

(which is, as a matter of fact, long established). But just enumerating them even in such a way that they are interconnected, does not yet make a theoretical system. The theory of any system, in its monistic interpretation, is built on a single foundation, on one idea (its choice depends on the general standpoint of the author of the theory). It is only in this case that it is constructed dialectically by the ascent of thought from the abstract to the concrete. Otherwise there will be no scientific theory, just an empirical description assuming the external form of theorising in which "incompatible" ideas will be brought together in an eclectic fashion. And this listing of the basic ideas of psychology pushes it precisely towards eclecticism.

The basis of human existence is the activity of man, the primary form of which is the production of tools. He always performs this activity within an aggregate of social relationships. That is why in science it is necessary first of all to consider the material-production activity of men shaped by the corresponding social relationships. It is impossible to begin studying people's lives straight from their production relations without first finding out what content is included in and formulated by their framework. In other words, the study of activity alone creates the necessary conditions for discovering the origin of social relations. This is very important for theoretical psychology.

A discussion has been going on among our psychologists recently about the correlation between the categories of activity and communication. B.F. Lomov has formulated the following provisions: "Communication is an aspect of man's way of life which is no less substantial than activity."[4] He goes on to say: "None of these (categories — V.D.) is exclusive for psychology to determine the essence of its subject."[5] We cannot agree with either of these provisions. Firstly, activity in its dialectic-materialistic interpretation is the **original basis** of the entire social life of mankind, while communication as a processual expression of their social relationships only shapes the content of activity within a certain framework. Communication among men can only take place during the process of carrying out activity. From the point of view of the principle of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, activity is thus a more substantial category than communication. Secondly, from this point of view the category of activity is **exclusive** for psychology since it determines the subject of the latter as a kind of "cell" (taking into account, of course, the actual psychological approach to activity).

Some psychologists try to base psychology on the idea of **attitude** (V.N. Myasishchev and others). If what is meant is a "social attitude," then it genetically depends on human activity. But if what is implied is man's attitude to nature, it is well known that the meaning of this idea is very close to that of **influence** on nature, i.e., the idea of production activity.[6]

On this level it seems to us that it is entirely wrong to "expand" the **primary** theoretical basis of modern psychology by adding the ideas

of set, attitude and communication to it (instead of **deducing** them from the original concept of activity).[7]

The view is also expressed that the activity approach (in other words the principle of activity) is holding back the development of our psychology a great deal since this approach asserts the correspondence of the goal and the result of action while their discordance can be observed in the process of creation. In studying the process of communication in which a creative effort takes place the activity approach allegedly loses its adequacy completely.[8]

These provisions question Marx's famous definition of the process of labour whereby its result already existed in the mind of man, i.e. in ideal form.[9] However, there are no substantial grounds for this doubt. If in studying creative communication among men we observe the fact of "discordance" between its goals and results, then it is necessary to explain it by revealing the many **mediating** links between the features of creative material labour and those of creative communication. These spheres cannot be compared directly and much less so can we reject the activity approach in psychology in general.

Turning the idea of activity into the basic idea of psychology as a whole does not mean absolutising the former. Firstly, it can be a theoretical instrument only in the process of its concretisation in deducing other psychological ideas (first of all the notions of the ideal, communication and consciousness). Secondly, the idea itself should be elaborated on on the basis of prerequisites available in the animal world (the behaviour and psychics of animals). At the same time it is necessary to repeat once again that the idea of activity cannot be put on a par with other psychological ideas since it must be primary, original and principal among them. Other ideas should be deduced on its basis in the theoretical processing of factual material.

That is why the question of the place the idea of activity should occupy in modern psychology is whether it should become a genuinely monistic theory or the empirical and eclectic systematisation of factual material.

Much is already known in psychology about the content and structure of man's activity which enabled Leontiev, for example, to develop a detailed theory. Among other things, he substantiated the provision to the effect that the principle of object relationships is the nucleus of the psychological theory of activity. He understood an object not as being one existing by itself and only influencing the subject, but as being something to which the subject's **action is directed**, to which it is somehow related and which is separated from it in the course of its transformation under the impact of an external or internal action.[10]

The object-related determination of activity is possible thanks to its special quality — **ability to assimilate** the properties and relationships of the objective world it transforms. The function of assimilation is fulfilled by the **search-and-testing** actions of the subject which forms the

images of the relevant objects. Originally activity is determined by the object and later it is **mediated** and regulated by its image as its product.

Leontiev's works set out the psychological structure of activity with the following components: need — motive — goal — conditions for attaining the goal (the unity of the goal and conditions makes up a **problem).** Man attains the goal in certain conditions (or solves the problem) by performing **actions** (an action consists of **operations** corresponding to the conditions of the problem). In the process of fulfilment integral activity constantly changes and transforms itself when, for example, an action is able to become an operation when its goal is changed, etc.

In his multifaceted life man performs many specific types of activity which differ first of all in their **object contents.** In other words, every type of activity has quite a definite group of needs, motives, problems and actions. One of the main problems of a psychological research is to determine the object content of every type of activity. Only when this problem is solved in a sufficiently clearcut manner is it possible to define one or other kind of psychological make-up observed in man as a concrete aspect of his activity.

The primary form of activity is its collective or joint execution. "In fact," Leontiev observed, "activity. . . implies not only the actions of a particular person, but also his actions in the conditions of the activity of other persons, that is, it implies a degree of joint activity."[11] Joint activity which has one collective subject gives rise to the individual activity of many subjects. The peculiarities and law-governed patterns of the execution of joint and individual activity are diverse, although their structure has common features. The formulation of individual activity inside and on the basis of joint activity is a process commonly described as **interiorisation.**

The first stage of a theoretical psychological study of activity evidently consists of determining the exact object content and structure of its collective form, the way its components are interconnected, ways of exchanging them, their different transformations, the conditions and laws governing the emergence of individual activity and its main characteristics (for example, the interconnection and transformation of the components, etc.) Although man's activity in both forms is conscious, the emergence of consciousness and its functions in activity at this stage of the study is difficult to examine because it is necessary to create in advance the "morphological picture" of the two forms of activity and determine the nature of their genetic interconnection.

There is reason to believe that the second stage of research into activity is linked with the examination of the origin and functions of its ideal plane. It should be noted that in psychology very little has been done so far to examine this problem, but in philosophy a number of serious works on the subject have now appeared. In our view, the most promising approach to the problem of the ideal on the basis of Marx's conceptions of it was described in works by E.V. Ilyenkov, who showed

that the ideal is a reflection of the external world in the socially definite forms of man's activity (for example, in the forms of language and logical categories). "Only when expressed in these forms does the external and the material turn into a social fact, the possession of sociable man, that is, into the ideal."[12] The ideal form of a material object is found in man's ability to reproduce or reconstruct it actively, relying on the need for it, and its image recorded in the word, for example. "The ideal is . . . the form of a thing, but is outside it, namely in man, in the form of his activity."[13]

In view of the specific features of the Marxist understanding of the ideal and the results of contemporary philosophical works on the subject, it would be fair to assume that at the second stage of the study of activity it is necessary to examine the **origin** of its ideal components (needs and goals as well as ideas forestalling its obtaining a result), while tracing the particular role of the language, drawings and all sorts of models in their objectification, and imparting a relevant social form to them. As Leontiev correctly observed, the language values represent the ideal form of the existence of the object world, its properties, connections and relations revealed by general social practice. In the long run it is possible at this stage to explain the conditions and laws governing the formation of the ability of man to produce and reconstruct objects in the course of joint activity. The ideal functions in the process of putting of this particular ability into practice.

At the third stage of this theoretical study of activity it is already possible to start examining such an important quality as consciousness arising in the contradictory transformations of activity itself as its necessary component.

As the basis of consciousness, the ideal **is** closely linked with the system of language values. And "...language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men."[14] The statements of men are the social event of their speech interaction. In formulating his statements every man seeks to take into account the views, convictions, sympathies and antipathies of his listeners. "A statement occupies some **definite** position in the given sphere of communication, on the given issue, in the given case, etc. It is impossible to define one's own position without correlating it with others."[15]

It is in the consciousness of an individual that the needs, interests, and positions of other men are represented in ideal form, i.e. those men who are included in definite social relationships and who participate, together with the individual in question in this or that joint activity (individuals are engaged in various types of material and speech **communication** in it). The individual's own activity is also ideally represented in his consciousness and thanks to this it can be assessed and planned, while taking into account the positions of other men. In

other words, the individual in question begins to act as a **sociable** man while also acting as a representative of definite social relationships. These features of consciousness are already found on the level of man's perception and direct contemplation. "To be able to see an object in a human way," Ilyenkov observed, "means to be able to see it 'with the eyes of another man,' with the eyes of everyone else, to pose in the very act of direct contemplation as a full-blooded representative of the 'human race.' "[16]

The three stages of the theoretical study of activity outlined make it possible to explain its content and structure by such substantial and inalienable qualities as idealness and consciousness. Many problems arise on the way to developing a monistic psychological theory on the basis of the original idea of activity. But these problems can be solved in principle if one is consistently guided by the possibilities and requirements of the activity approach to the study of man.

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5. Ibid., p. 258.
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Part 2

Discussion and Criticism

Chapter 11

ACTIVITY AS AN OPEN SYSTEM

By V.S. Shvyrev

At the very outset I would like to say that I approach the texts in this book first of all in terms of how they analyze and treat the subject which I am trying to research myself — the concept of activity as a philosophical category. I focus my attention on the initial assumptions that form the basis for the understanding of activity as a specific human form of activeness, a specific form of man's interaction with the world. That is why I shall limit my analysis to those views in these texts which in my opinion primarily treat activity in these terms. This will enable me to state more clearly my understanding of the basic concept of activity. Works related to the possible use of the category of activity in historical materialism and psychology go beyond the scope of the investigation outlined above.

I shall first turn to G.S. Batyshchev's position as stated in Section One. For the sake of clarity and to preclude any misunderstanding I shall stress from the very beginning that in my opinion he is undoubtedly correct when he brings to our attention the existence of a type of human activeness — the human deed, as he puts it — whose appropriately understood characteristics he assigns to the concept of activity in the sense in which he uses this notion. Therefore, it is not the reality of human activeness that is questioned, but whether it is possible to rationalize this reality in the category of activity. G.S. Batyshchev rejects this possibility. Moreover, he believes that an attempt to make the category of activity universal and to extend it to the entire sphere of man's interaction with the world as a whole would be in principle a flawed assumption in "intellectual-practical" and even axiological terms. Let us note that he is correct if activity is understood only as he understands it, and as it is understood, in his view, by the proponents of the activity approach who favor turning so-called activity into a "supercategory."

However, there is a certain lack of clarity here. The fact is that in his text G.S. Batyshchev does not state explicitly his own understanding of the category of activity. He proceeds from an understanding of activity which is not quite clearly expressed although in general it can be "figured out" fairly easily. He then contrasts this understanding with the reality of what emerges as creativity and states that of course the

latter clearly does not correspond to activity thus understood. On this basis he concludes rather categorically that it is inadmissible to make the category of activity universal. The possibility of a broader understanding of activity is not considered. This is a critical analysis of the negative aspect of this approach. The positive aspect of the text is the investigation of the nature of creativity which the author links with communication. In his opinion, communication is a a form of human activeness fundamentally different from objective activity, as it is usually understood. In fact, activity interests G.S. Batyshchev only in so far as it makes it possible to highlight his understanding of the special nature of creativity and communication.

For my part I emphasize that if the concept of activity is limited only to conscious, goal-oriented activeness to transform the outside world, regulated by social and cultural norms, then, of course, it cannot be viewed as a universal feature of man's relation to the world. This is not activity in the fullness of its possibilities, "open" to the existence that encompasses man, including the existence of his unrealized potential; this is socio-cultural "behavior," the implementation of socio-cultural programs that have been externally defined for man and relate to solving the tasks in the framework of the "paradigm" that has formed in society of a given type and at a given level of development. Therefore, if this is activity then it is "intraparadigmal" activity.

From my point of view, first of all, there is no reason for restricting the initial content of the notion "activity" solely to activity to attain a set goal, to implement programs, norms, etc., in brief, to goal-conforming activity. The initial concept of activity must include both goal-conforming and goal-setting elements, something that, in my view, N.S. Zlobin described well and in detail. Activity is "open" to the existence encompassing it in that it assumes the ever-present possibility of going beyond the horizon of a set goal once it has been attained, of moving past the formulation of basic program elements.

Secondly, the initial understanding of the category of activity must not be limited to subject-object relations, to "object activity" understood in a narrow "material" sense. In this respect I fully agree with V.N. Sagatovsky's point that activity is still activity when it is not directed outward, but toward changing the subject himself, and when he indicates that it characterizes the entire system of subject-subject and subject-object relations as a whole. I am also in agreement with him when he criticizes the opposition of activity to communication (B.F. Lomov) as well as approaches to the study of society in terms of activity and natural history .

Thus, I favor use of the category of activity to express the essence of man's special interrelationship with the world, provided that a fairly broad view is taken of the distinguishing features of activity. For me, they primarily relate to the "openness" of activity in relation to the existence encompassing it, whether inside or outside man. In passing I

will note that this approach as a matter of principle excludes substantialization of activity, any absolute "human beginning," or anthropocentrism which, inter alia, find expression in the Hegelian or pseudo-Hegelian concept of the identity of the subject and the object.

This interpretation does not turn activity into some "supercategory." This category is by no means intended to explain "absolutely everything" in the real empirical being of the society and people who form the society. Similarly, for example, the basic Marxist idea concerning the dual nature of a commodity cannot directly explain the empirical facts of capitalist production. In conceptual theoretical terms, this category constitutes an initial **precondition** for analysis. In itself it does not contain a basis for explaining specific phenomena. In what then lies its investigatory and explanatory significance?

First of all, in my opinion, it is valuable because it treats the subject matter of the investigation as a **whole.** In this specific case, the subject matter is man's activeness, his "acts" as he interacts with the world in the organic unity of his productive and reproductive beginnings, his creative and performing aspects, elements that lay the basis and recreate the preconditions for this activeness. The concept of activity that reduces man's active beginning only to the realization of a set sociocultural program, is not suitable for this task. Similarly, in my view, an approach which severs creative activity to expand the "scope" of human existence and activity regarded as work within that given "scope" is also inadequate. In particular, this separation makes it impossible to study appropriately the role of the feedback from the resistance of reality, which goes beyond the possibilities of "deobjectification," the emergence of a problem situation, or to understand the very "ontology" of creativity.

At this point, however, we come to a very important question. I believe that G.S. Batyschev's position has contributed to highlighting this issue. The existing concepts of activity, including those that admit that activity is capable of permanently developing its underlying programs and preconditions, proceed from the assumption that this "self-construction of the subject" occurs solely through his own efforts as he explores new planes and horizons of the object that is opposite to him (cf., for example, E.V. Ilyenkov's approach). In G.S. Batyschev's view, creativity always assumes the resonance of interaction, impulses coming (and not "transcended" in the activity of the object) from the other (at least) equal "partner." For me, it is by no means axiomatic that this "dimension" should necessarily be excluded from the content of the category of activity, if its essence is perceived in the absence of a fixed and externally defined limit on mankind's "self-construction."

The differences in approaches to what kind of realities should be included in the category of activity is even more pronounced if we compare the basic assumptions of A.L. Nikiforov's position and my theory. It should be added here that the conceptual and terminological differences in these positions reflect the differences in methodological approaches.

A.L. Nikiforov's point of departure is an attempt to develop a typology of empirically registered manifestations of human activeness. My view is that the **philosophical** category of activity must serve as the basic assumption for a more specific analysis of different forms and manifestations of human activeness. It is clear that under this approach it cannot be used to identify one of many specific forms that exist along with others. Therefore, it is not just different realities that are joined together in one field as a subject matter for an investigation are involved; this is even a case of a different organization of the field of research. In brief, we are talking about different research tasks.

As for A.L. Nikiforov's position, evaluated this time in terms of its effectiveness for solving the tasks which he himself has defined, then, of course, empirically it is possible to register the form of activeness which A.L. Nikiforov conceives as the concept of activity and contrasts with what he describes as "behavior." However, in my view, these empirically registered forms of activeness cannot be used as a basis for "ideal types" to formulate a certain comprehensive concept of human activeness, in particular, to explain the concept of creativity. These empirically registered forms themselves have yet to be understood in the context of the development of man's integral humanly personal relation to the world. Thus, for example, the impulsiveness or spontaneity of a human action in the framework of what A.L. Nikiforov describes as behavior, turns out to be the "transcended" result of the personal meaning sphere development. In the framework of this sphere, in its turn, goal-conforming activeness described by A.L. Nikiforov as "activity," occurs and is regulated. In other words, the analytical nature of a typology relying on these surface external features, if it forms the basis of a conceptual theoretical approach and not a precondition for it, makes it difficult to understand the reality under consideration as a whole and to reveal the intrinsic elements which help grasp the peculiarity of the special forms of this reality.

In my opinion, the question of how "well-thought-out" and **rational** activity is deserves special attention. A.L. Nikiforov addresses this issue, and I.T. Kasavin makes a special study of it. Here once again everything depends on how "activity" is understood. I agree that the goal-directed activeness that A.L. Nikiforov writes about presupposes that it is well-thought-out, that individual steps are clearly defined, etc. This aspect should of course be born in mind. For me, however, the emphasis should be placed on something else, on stressing the "openness" of activity, the goal-setting and not "goal-attaining" aspect. In this case, let us say, a well-thought-out goal-directed desire to profit in life in one way or another, and a spontaneous noble action taken on impulse, "without looking where one treads," will both prove to be the manifestations of activity as a way to formulate goals mediated in the motivational-meaning sphere. In both cases, goals as objective guidelines of activity are not defined by organic nature, and this "personal and cultural" for-

mulation of the goal makes it possible to present the situations described by the concept of activity, irrespective of the mechanisms of its attainment, as a rational "step-by-step" sequence, or an irrational impulsiveness. If we do not take activity in its personal manifestations, at the sociocultural level, then a similar situation obtains.

The features of rationality, and conscious control in the framework of the understanding of activity which I share must be viewed not in connection with the mechanism for the realization of the adopted system of norms and goals but in the context of the elaboration of this system. From this point of view, activity does not necessarily have to be a rational reflection, as is the case, for example, with creativity on the basis of the "collective unconscious" in traditional societies. The point is not whether it is possible or not to identify the external features of rationality, for example, when magical rites are performed. What is important, in my view, is that real life problems confronting this society are solved through "collective unconscious" and not on the basis of constructing such basic elements of activity through rational reflection as, despite all their deficiencies, can provide opportunities for solving these problems.

Modern civilization with its consciousness based on rational reflection is of course a different matter. Here expanding the scope of activity and "reprogramming" it can and must be achieved on the basis of rational reflection which presupposes an analysis of the real objective situation, its problems and possible ways to solve them constructively. I agree with the thrust of I.T. Kasavin's approach who, as I see it, believes that essentially the question of rationality of activity relates to studying possible ways of programing it not in terms of ensuring its effectiveness in attaining a certain goal, but in the context of goal-setting determined by the pressure of the problem situation.

Chapter 12

THE ACTIVITY APPROACH IN THE CAPTIVITY OF SUBSTANTIALISM

By G.S. Batyschev

I do not have any objections to activity-related problems as such or, if preferable, to the activity approach as one of the possible approaches. Nor do I have any doubts about its validity. Moreover, by following this approach as far as it goes, any unprejudiced researcher will see that it also has a critical scope beyond which it ceases to be a useful tool. This is in fact how we should determine the limitations of methods — we should consider every possibility offered by each specific approach, giving it the most favored approach treatment. Working within this approach, it becomes clear where and in what respect it exhausts itself.

However, who has not been tempted to present his favorite adopted procedure, approach or method as the best or even the only one possible? It is indeed very hard to fight this feeling. However, to resist this temptation is even harder when a not altogether selfless consideration comes into play — a promise of reliable simplicity and useful absence of problems guaranteeing a certain World Order which, if accepted, assures minimal troubles, worries and responsibility. This is especially tough for a researcher who thereby does not have to acknowledge that he is a radical.

This is precisely what is objectionable — someone's claim that his method, no matter what it is, plays an exclusive role in cognition, that his theory or approach is the only one that is acceptable or scientific. In this way the activity approach not only acquires an uncharacteristic negative function — to reject any approaches that are different. There is also the risk that the introduction of such universalistic claims will distort and twist its very meaning. That is why a critical analysis ridding the activity approach of such claims is needed not only to make room for different views, which would only be fair, but also for the normal logical development of this approach itself.

These universalistic claims are most apparent in V.V. Davydov's position. He refuses to recognize approaches other than the activity approach or to grant them validity. He extends recommendations appropriate for his approach to everything and presents them as requirements of some universal methodological discipline with which any researcher

needs to comply. He insists on monism, on the "monistic principle," and demands that all of psychology be deduced from only one concept — activity. But how do we deal with communication, which many studies have already shown to be an independent and fundamentally significant category? The answer is categorical — reject everything, do not admit anything except that which can be deduced from activity which "must be placed before everything else". . . Thus, right before our eyes, the activity approach turns into activity reductionism.

Of course, any attempt to follow through the theoretical inferences from an adopted assumption (even though the method applied is the ascension from the abstract to the concrete) inevitably narrows the scope of research. Such consistency entails a considerable sacrifice — this has always been the case. However, the sacrifice and the narrowed scope are not recognized here as a limitation ("I cannot do better, so far I cannot do it any other way"); on the contrary, this is presented as an advantage. Where does this logic come from?

This logic comes from Hegelian panlogism and substantialism, to which the wisdom of dialectics is sacrificed and subordinated. It comes from an uncritical belief in the simplicity of the absolute Beginning which determines everything in the world in advance; it provides a script, as it were, for all cultural or historical dramas. This belief simplifies life. The substantialist claims the exclusive right and ability to identify the "image" of the Substance which he initially chose with the Substance itself, and his own quite earthly "voice" with the "voice" of the Substance; thus the Substance is not only allegedly totally transparent and comprehensible to him, but in fact uses him as its mouthpiece on Earth, as it were. What is regrettable about this approach is not the evocation of something absolute — man cannot live without absolute guidelines, — but the replacement of the self-critical search with an anthropomorphous or sociomorphous image of the absolute which excludes any undiscovered possibility, anything beyond the limit, any mystery.

A man who has not extinguished the spark of life in him with some one-hundred-percent accurate absolute "idea" or guaranteed substantiality, in reality every day encounters the ever-changing universe that no being can exhaust or complete. He rediscovers it simultaneously at fundamentally different levels, ranging from the level of an ordinary objective thing to the most sophisticated dialectics which nourishes our highest value aspirations. Thus, a multi-dimensional and multi-level man, seeking and acquiring the assimilation of the similar by the similar, rediscovers and shall endlessly encounter multi-dimensional and multi-level reality outside him. All these levels, many most likely unknown to us today, will never match the pattern of only one approach. Be it activity-based or some other method, it will never possible to deduce them from only one concept or squeeze them into a linear sequence. In his particular and special characteristics man is an heir to

the very many types of sociality and an entire hierarchy of cultures that lie dormant within him. His subjective world comprises diverse types of relations between him and the world that run in opposite directions. That is why psychology and especially educational science can be adequate in humanistic terms only when they rely on cultural diversity and polyphonic harmony (including all instances of disharmony) of essentially different potentials and different levels in the structure of the emerging man. This emergence, this never-to-be-completed process of self-formation is man's normal state.

Despite V.V. Davydov's claims and recommendations, a specific man is by no means encompassed by any organic system nor can his world be revealed through any ascension which is appropriate within this system. Generally speaking, the dialectic of organic systems is no longer inadequate. A different and more refined dialectic of harmonious systems is needed, more suitable to reflect creativity. Here the principle of transcendence no longer predominates; it is also possible to assert non-transcended contents in all their unextinguished uniqueness and the tone is set by harmonious polyphony. This more advanced type of dialectics is emerging right before our eyes, not only in numerous studies of humanities but also in natural sciences that rise up to "the dialogue with nature."

In particular this idea, which perverts the activity approach, manifests itself in that axiological motivation is replaced with a need-determined motivation which is functionally dependent on the relation of usefulness. This is precisely what V.V. Davydov writes about motives — they make needs more specific.[1] This essentially is need — reductionism, i.e. man's motives are stimulated and determined by needs; he does not transcend them or subordinate them to something more noble, e.g. value aspirations. In reality, only when the subject overcomes, transcends, controls or goes beyond the limits of need-determinism can he accept objective tasks adequately. This is especially true when coming to grips with a problem situation that requires a creative approach, without any previously given "need yardstick," with his own measure and selfish interest. Only when the subject goes beyond the consideration of usefulness — in the sense of higher levels of his existence — do truly creative development and improvement begin.

In the captivity of substantialism the activity approach is misleading — it leaves no room for the entire axiological sphere *per se* and encourages a nihilistic view of it. It makes it impossible to understand that any unqualified value neither serves the need nor is its function, nor does it derive from "want." It acts as a judge, a basis for passing judgement upon all man's needs, preferences, interests or wants, enabling a person to pass a verdict on his needs in the inner court of his mind.

Finally, V.V. Davydov's substantialism reveals itself in his concept of interiorization. Let me clarify that I am not referring to the fact of interiorization, just as I am not speaking about externalization — a fact of

considerable significance. The reference is to a concept which interprets the correlation between the individual's personal world and society as a correlation between individual and joint activity (the first unfounded reduction), and treats this individual activity as wholly resulting from the interiorization of joint activity within an individual subject (the second invalid reduction).

First of all, as the individual matures, the cultural and historical reservoirs and sources he taps are by no means filled only with "joint" activity. Input very much removed from and very much unlike "joint activity" should not be ignored either. Furthermore, every man, being indeed "a republic of subjects" within (S.L. Rubinshtein), maintains and establishes relations that are by no means exhausted by those that lend themselves to objectification in their contents, but also contain above-threshold contents. In this lies the possibility of deep-level communication, which is totally rejected by the substantialistic version of the activity approach. Finally, to present the subjective world only as the result of the interiorization of its environment is to ignore man's creative and personal role in history and universal evolution in general. It is to reduce him to only one function — a player of pre-assigned roles. It is to deny man his genuine and profoundly creative relation to the world. It is also to ignore the fact that culture can be inherited only through interaction with creativity, through meeting man's truly creative challenges. It is, ultimately, to steer the theory and practice of education toward training only the work force, including in terms of developing man's intellectual faculties, i.e. to turn man into a member of the workforce with a given useful qualification and the ability to execute orders.

Conclusion: we must join our forces to release the activity approach from the captivity of substantialism.

1. Davydov, V.V. Problems of Developing Education. Moscow, 1986, p. 26. (In Russian)

Chapter 13

DEFINING ACTIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF A RESEARCH TASK

By I.T. Kasavin

The author of this article has used the concept of activity in two meanings that are mutually related — as a means to explain the phenomenon of rationality and as an object to be evaluated in terms of rationality. In their turn, these aspects of activity — gnosiological and ontological — represent a problem that a number of researchers view differently, as demonstrated by the opinions contained in this book. In what are they similar and in what do their authors disagree? Essentially the focal point of all debate is the question of the scope and limits of the concept of activity. Is it possible to use the concept of activity as a basis for a philosophical theory or a theory of a specific discipline? Can it perform the function of the "primary cell" of a theoretical investigation? Is it feasible to develop a special activity theory or is only the activity approach justified? Is the concept of activity a universal explanatory principle of social cognition or must it be complemented, say, by the concept of communication? Should it be deduced from the fundamental principles of the materialistic understanding of history?

Let us begin with the most general assumptions of an approach to the concept of activity. It appears that the broad use of this concept in recent years has not always produced positive results. Philosophers now regard it as a "supercategory," yet not all manifestations of human existence can be interpreted in terms of activity. Activity is in vogue among philosophers and G.S. Batyshchev believes that this does not help to explain what this notion means. There is much that is rational in the critical assessment of the approach which treats activity as an absolute and this evaluation can also apply to other philosophical categories (especially if we recall the champions of a broad interpretation of such concepts as information, systems approach, etc.). As for Batyshchev's own view of activity, some of the reasons he advances to justify it are questionable.

Batyshchev specifies the meaning of the notion "activity" by comparing it with the concept "creativity." This comparison, albeit interesting, yields mixed results. First of all, it turns out that activity itself is noncreative since it is strictly defined by its cultural patterns and paradigms,

which do not overlap. This is literally an assertion of cultural incompatibility with all the ensuing consequences. Secondly, creativity is not allowed to be activity because it is in fact "outside culture," it only "moves the threshold," which turns it into a very mysterious act. Yet, with all that, creativity appears to be synonymous with . . ."activity of a fundamentally different level of perfection," in other words, it is simply a qualitatively new type of activity, and the transition to it allegedly constitutes the essence of a creative act. But why the persistence in opposing activity to creativity as well as to "deep-level communication"? The reason is Batyshchev's rather narrow understanding of activity. This is also why motives, goals and values are opposed to activity itself within a system of its needs; the former are viewed as a basis for man's "harmonious existence," while the latter as a source of anthropocentrism, behaviorism, etc. Batyshchev probably overlooks the fact that, thereby, social needs themselves receive a one-sided naturalistic interpretation, whereas man not only satisfies his diverse needs but also generates, perfects, and evaluates them, making them human. High intellectual values, motives and goals do not appear out of nowhere; they have a system of intellectual needs as their basis, which in turn is determined by culture and man's place in it. This "need determinism" (Batyshchev's term) by no means deprives man of his creative potential; it simply no longer presents it as a mysterious extra-cultural phenomenon.

These conclusions, *inter alia*, are supported by the analysis of activity in the text by V.N. Sagatovsky. He analyzes activity in connection with its meaning and value content, its ability to shape the subject and not just to roughly transform nature. According to Sagatovsky, activity characterizes the entire system of subject-object and subject-subject relations in terms of the manifestation of man's essential powers. This view is borne out by the comparison of activity as a dynamic process and a static relation, activity as externally observable action and consciousness, activity as external activeness and passivity. It sees activity as the unity of the subject and the object and a subjectless emotion, activity and the natural historical process, activity and communication. At the same time, a demonstration of the possibilities and potential applications inherent in the concept of activity poses the risk of leading to an extreme opposite to the one resulting from a narrow interpretation of activity. Regarded as a methodological principle, activity begins to remind us of the above-mentioned "supercategory" which Batyshchev criticizes because its specific content has been lost.

The arguments in favor of the activity approach by V.S. Shvyrev appear to be more convincing. In particular, they make it possible to understand the origins of the narrow interpretation of activity. Why is it understood as determined by needs, limited by its actual level and content, turned in on itself and devoid of any noble meaning? This is probably because activity is sometimes regarded only as the application of elaborated norms goals, programs, and not as a specific form of

developing ways and means to relate to the world. Shvyrev is right in pointing out that a "paradigm" not related to the process of cultural creativity turns into a scheme of acculturized behavior, and creative activity taken out of its practical context turns into an extraordinary thing. It should be emphasized that activity as a truly human relation to the world retains this quality regardless of the specific historical form of its sociality (revolution, tradition, escapism, activism, etc.). In any case, the deficiencies of any specific theories of activity do not prove the limitations of the activity approach.

At this point it is appropriate to turn to another instance of the narrow interpretation of activity — the text by A.L. Nikiforov. In his view, activity is goal-conforming (more precisely, goal-oriented) activeness, which, while being well thought out in advance is at the same time machine-like and impersonal and this sets it apart from behavior that carries a personal stamp. I agree with Nikiforov on the point that the scope of human activeness cannot be reduced to activity even though activity is man's distinguishing feature in the animal world. However, here it becomes clear that the author indirectly contradicts himself — on the one hand, activity is impersonal and machine-like, and, on the other, it characterizes man as a social and rational being. Furthermore, an animal can also engage in machine-like activity which produces a predictable result (for example, a monkey can turn on the light), and therefore such activity cannot be distinguished from simple activeness — again a clear contradiction. The fact, noted by the author, that activity can yield different and mutually exclusive results also does not fit in with its machine-like nature, especially since along with activity being well thought out in advance, the thinking process is not "switched off" in the course of it, a point which for one reason or another is overlooked. Finally, it is hardly warranted to assume that when the goal and the result coincide, a correct decision was taken in selecting a behavior pattern — when a sorcerer from the Azande tribe in Africa performs the rain dance, sooner or later rain will come, but does it mean that his pattern of activity corresponds to an objective truth?

Anyway, in the end it turns out that the author's definition of activity and the concepts of activity and creativity that he employs are only ideal models that do not reflect reality. Nikiforov opts for a most original approach: he demonstrates that the concept of activity being discussed in his text is totally ineffective for analyzing, say, the modern process of labor activity. This negative result is undoubtedly important for criticizing abstract views on activity, however, it only partially coincides with the goal the author sets himself, i.e. to emphasize the connection between activity and behavior. Going by the author's own criterion, as a result, his view loses rationality and the theoretical strategy for the analysis of activity he elaborates becomes not quite correct. However, despite the conclusions that follow from the author's assumptions, he presents an interesting and thought-provoking argument.

The discussion of activity is not limited to general problems alone. Another question is whether activity can form the basis of a theory for a specific science (for example, psychology) or for a philosophical theory (in particular, for the materialistic understanding of history). In V.V. Davydov we find an ardent champion of the universalization of the concept of activity in psychology; there is probably no other author in the book who is so "activity-inclined" or has exposed himself so boldly to the fire of criticism. However, is it reasonable to expect that all the diversity of psychological knowledge can be deduced from one concept, no matter how deduction is understood? Of course, psychologists see more clearly what their science needs, yet not all psychologists share this extreme view. Thus, A.V. Brushlinsky, who insists that activity must be complemented by communication, takes a different view of activity than V.V. Davydov who excludes subject-subject relations from it (an approach that V.N. Sagatovsky, for example, does not agree with). On the other hand, Brushlinsky's text does not provide sufficient justification for using communication as a necessary complement to activity either (why not indeed behavior or creativity, as other authors suggest?). It has to be noted with regret that, when psychologists discuss problems of activity, by and large they restate extreme views that oppose philosophers and that it is high time for them to stop.

V.Z. Kelle argues against attempts to present a broad interpretation of the activity approach and use it to replace all of historical materialism or to deduce historical materialism from the concept of activity. His position is indeed hard to contend with because activity itself needs a dialectical materialistic interpretation in the system of Marxist philosophy. Moreover, it does not make sense to speak about activity outside the context of social and production relations (including in the sphere of intellectual production), since without that we run the risk of depriving activity of any social content. If we turn to the basis of historical materialism — the theory of the economic formation of society — then, in a sense, the concept of activity does emanate from this theory since it addresses general regularities of people's activity in history. However, this statement by no means suggests that people's activity is irrelevant for the natural historical process of the development of society. This idea is emphasized by Y.K. Pletnikov, who notes that social practice (as the principal form of activity) may well serve as a point of departure for a theoretical investigation of the historical process.

What approach should be adopted then? Should a materialistic analysis of history begin with the theory of formation or with human activity? Should the principal philosophical question be solved first of all in reference to society or should its justification in specific terms precede it? Such formulation of the problem already shows that any one-sided view concerning its solution is untenable. Historical materialism (just like any theoretical system) should probably be developed by taking account of the specific objectives of the research and the needs of

science and practice that bring into prominence different aspects of the problem every day. Marxists cannot be materialists first and researchers afterward, or the other way around. And finally, the important thing in this case is not whether activity is deduced from something else or whether everything else is deduced from activity. The criterion for evaluating and selecting a specific theoretical approach should be how it reveals the content of human activity in specific historical terms.

In my view, most appropriate for this task is an understanding of activity which focuses on the means man uses to explore the world. This understanding appears to be most adequate for describing all the diversity of human activity and for differentiating activity from non-activity. For example, the opposition of productive and reproductive, creative and routine activity becomes clearer if activity is regarded, on the one hand, as the creation of the means to explore the world and, on the other, as the use of these means. The creation and use of the sphere of cultural mediation in man's relations with the world and other people is precisely what characterizes the human form of activeness. For example, at first glance unconscious behavior, contemplation or an emotional outburst have nothing in common with activity. However, a concrete analysis can reveal that cultural resources of activity are created and used in the framework of such activeness. Thus, intellectual contemplation has formed a specific theoretical activity in the framework of projective (synthetic) geometry, emotional excitement generates and makes it possible to use various means to influence the mind (ranging from the effect of magic to placebo and theater), while a number of sophisticated professional skills can be acquired only in the form of automated activity sequences. Conversely, activity in its irrational or reduced forms, incapable of using or creating new means to explore cultural reality, turns out to be a simple psychosomatic reaction such as fear, hunger, sleep, bliss, stupor, etc. In any case, the problem of differentiating activity and non-activity, developing a typology of activity still awaits new and imaginative solutions.

Chapter 14

THE COMMON AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN ACTIVITY

By A.L. Nikiforov

The articles in this collection give me an opportunity to make a few general comments on the manner in which we philosophize in general and our approach to activity in particular.

Unfortunately, the excellent texts by Y.K. Pletnikovt, V.Z. Kelle, V.S. Shvyrev, and G.S. Batyshchev focus too much on a question that is unworthy of any attention, i.e. the role and significance of the concept of activity in historical materialism. In my view, this is a typical example of a pseudo-problem. Indeed, what will change if I recognize that the concept of activity is central or secondary to historical materialism, that it can help us solve all problems that arise in the theory of society and man or only some of them? Any answer to this question is determined only by the personal preferences of an individual author. This observation also holds true of the quest for the "correct" definition of the concept of activity. All talk by proponents and opponents of the activity approach will remain absolutely empty as long as the discussion is conducted at such an abstract level. In order for the discussion to make at least some sense, it is necessary to address a specific problem to see whether the concept of activity helps us solve this problem or whether it is totally useless. If it does, so much the better; if it does not, then that's not bad, either, and in this case different conceptual means must be sought. When we assert then that the concept of activity can help us solve all problems of historical materialism, this statement can rely only on faith. However, it is as good to have faith in that there will be other problems which shall not need the concept of activity at all to be discussed and solved. Should we then waste our breath arguing whose faith is better?

The sad fact is that underlying all these futile debates concerning the status of the concept of activity is a profound and strong belief that exerts a disastrous influence on the discussion of almost all problems of Marxist philosophy. I am referring to the conviction that Marxist philosophy is a science and that solutions of universal significance can and should be sought in its framework , i.e., solutions that every philosopher must accept if he understands them and is not blinded by group interest. Just

as in science, all scholars accept certain theories, recognize a certain body of laws, agree with the results of experiments regardless of where and when they were obtained. In philosophy, too, we allegedly must strive to elaborate some common paradigm that would provide us with answers of universal significance to all philosophical questions. That is why, for example, in his article, Y.K. Pletnikov is looking for a "scientific solution" to the principal question of philosophy. However, what does it mean to solve this question scientifically? To conduct an experiment that would unambiguously prove that matter is primary and consciousness is secondary? To prove the materialistic solution through logic and mathematics? To resort to observation or measuring? To gather more facts that would serve as a basis for an inductive justification of a specific answer? I do not think there is anyone among us whose sense of humor is so poor that he will take these questions seriously.

However, if the answer is "no," then what features of "science" have we in mind when we insist that Marxist philosophy is a science? Only one feature remains — the general significance of its provisions. Marxist philosophy and its individual representatives must strive for general significance. Every Soviet philosopher must make and defend only those assertions that claim to be "truths," that describe a certain "objective" reality and therefore must be accepted by all; and if the philosopher's ideas are not accepted, then this is regarded as proof that they are "false." This explains why such questions as the place of the concept of activity in the system of historical materialism are treated so seriously since if we elaborate a scientific system, i.e. a theory of general significance, then each of its elements must take its "true" place, and when we manage to find this place, controversy and debates must cease, as happens in science.

The conviction that Marxist philosophy is a science is not only a foolish but also harmful prejudice. Philosophy has never been and shall never be a science! This applies to Marxist philosophy, too. The word "science" makes sense as applied to Marxist philosophy only in so far as our philosophical system does not contradict scientific data, the most important facts of human history, and attempts to prove rather than believe. The basic difference between science and philosophy has always been this — while science seeks and establishes that which is objectively true, i.e., knowledge about the world that does not depend on the subject, philosophy tries to express the relation to the world of certain sectors of society, groups or even individuals. Science strives to eliminate subjectivity from its results and to present them as impersonal objective knowledge, while, for philosophy, subjectivity is its most valuable asset. That is why no one philosophical system can claim to be of general significance because as long as there are different social groups in human society, different philosophical outlooks will also continue to exist. Moreover, even the views of followers of one philosophical school cannot totally overlap, since an author's personal tastes and preferences,

his personal view of and attitude to the world will inevitably find expression in his philosophical views and reflections, if they are sincerely expressed. So long as we remain different personalities, we shall hold different views of the world. That is why there isn't and cannot be any general significance in the realm of philosophy, and it is pointless and inhuman to strive toward it. Let a researcher's personal preferences determine his attitude to the concept of activity being discussed here — one investigator may believe in the fruitfulness of this concept and use it extensively in his reasoning, while another does not need it and solves his problems with the help of other conceptual means. And this is good, first of all because for its development philosophy does not need not monotonous repetition of and comments upon supposedly generally recognized truths which are almost non-existent here; it requires the expression of the philosopher's personal view of the world, his individual attitude to the world, typical characteristics of his intellect and temperament, which in the final analysis represents a subjective perception of and gives an expression to the mood of an epoch. If we perceive affinity in the personality of the author, if we see things, feel and reason in a similar way, we are prepared to accept his ideas and we are grateful to him for having formulated clearly the ideas which we only vaguely sensed. Why then do we reach out for ideas of general significance when what is most important is the individual and unique?

The desire to appear scientific also distorts our view of human activity. In analyzing and describing activity, we constantly emphasize that it is carried out by a social subject, i.e. a person who belongs to a certain social structure that determines the forms, types and stereotypes of activity. An abstract view of man as a personified embodiment of society or a social group leads to an equally abstract and objectivistic description of activity which states that the conditions of activity are objective, they provide the natural social milieu in which a man acts; the conditions determine the selection of a goal; the goal in its turn determines the adequate ways and means to attain it. But where is there room for the individual here? He does not exist. It is society that acts through the individual, who, like a dummy, takes the standard steps of his prescribed dance or emerges as an impersonal external force shifting the machine of activity into gear.

This description looks scientific because it singles out and captures only the general and significant in the activity of different individuals. In a similar way, say, mechanics singles out and describes only those general and significant features which characterize the movement of a stone, a bullet, an arrow, or a billiard ball. In mechanics (kinematics) it is enough to indicate the speed and the acceleration of a bullet to determine the trajectory of its flight, and what the flying bullet "thinks" or the difference in the movement of different bullets is totally irrelevant. However, this description is often inadequate when we speak about man. In particular, a description of activity only in terms of activeness of a

social subject makes it impossible for us to understand human creativity or to indicate the source of the new. I believe that N.S. Zlobin raises exactly this problem.

Indeed, if the subject of activity is no more than personified society, i.e., if he acts only in accordance with social norms and standards, then where do changes in these standards come from and how do new norms appear? We cannot answer this question if we do not turn to the personality of the acting subject, if we do not recognize that he is more than just a product of social relations. Zlobin believes that goal-setting constitutes the source of the new, i.e. not the conditions, but a freely acting subject himself determines the choice of a goal. I fully agree with this view and would even go further to say that, when the subject analyzes the circumstances, selects his goal, elaborates a plan of action, or chooses his means, although he relies on socially accepted norms and standards, he is nonetheless guided by his own understanding of the situation, his tastes and preferences. That is why different individuals perform in different ways even one and the same activity and the result of an activity carries the imprint of the personality of the agent. Society cannot generate the new. It is generated only by the individual who violates existing social norms and standards, puts features of his individuality into action, often makes mistakes, fails to attain his goals, sometimes even perishes, but sometimes is successful and creates new models of activity and behavior. That is why no matter how important it is to describe activity in terms of the social relations it embodies, it is no less important to describe it as creative self-expression by an individual.

For far too long we regarded the individual only as a representative of social relations, a class, or a social group, and neglected the special and unique features of his personality. This has left an imprint not only on our philosophy, but on our ideology and the organization of social production. Today, in very different places, people are calling louder and louder for more humane social relations.

Chapter 15

ACTIVITY: MONISM AT ANY PRICE OR POLYPHONY?

By V.I. Sagatovsky

The polemical question taken as the title for this article has been prompted primarily by the philosophical dilemma formulated by G.S. Batyshchev:

> ...either humanity devotes itself to the service of the Universe and, in effect, its open substantiality and its creative possibilities, or humanity serves only itself, and its own substantialized egocentricity. There is no other alternative. . . .

Selecting the first option and before proceeding with an analysis of opposite views, I would like to give a brief answer to the question formulated in the title.

1. Monism at any price, i.e., an attempt to provide a full explanation of man on the basis of a one-sided interpretation of activity (as, for example, in the text by V.V. Davydov) objectively leads to the realization of the second of the possible options.

2. Monism is necessary and possible only when human existence in its totality is deduced from a "cell" that actually contains its basic contradiction, which, in our view, is the contradiction between determination-from-the-object (the process of natural history) and determination-from-the-subject (activity). Monism therefore requires that the basic contradiction be deduced from one beginning, but by no means from one factor.

3. Monism is insufficient when human existence goes beyond the framework of the opposition "activity — the process of natural history," when we make the transition from organic systems to harmonious systemic unities which are intrinsically polyphonic.

Having thus defined my position, I would now like to turn to the texts by other authors to determine, firstly, the views that I can share and, secondly, the opinions I cannot accept.

Views I can share...

1. Activity is a basic philosophical concept comparable in its generality

with categories of social being and consciousness. It is generic in relation to specific types of activity. This concept is central to the understanding of the special nature of "man's world" (V.Z. Kelle, V.S. Shvyrev).

2. The special nature of activity is not only in that it is goal-conforming; its essence primarily manifests itself in choice, in the inherent "openness" of its basis, in the free and creative setting of goals (V.S. Shvyrev, I.T. Kasavin, N.S. Zlobin).

3. Dissatisfaction, albeit not explicit enough, is expressed over the fact that activity is reduced to subject-object relations, only to the transformation of the objective reality; it appears possible that activity will include "the ability for self-change," "the world of human subjectivity;" it is stated that this transformation of one's own world includes communication, "understanding," "dialogue," etc. (V.S. Shvyrev).

4. Attempts are made to limit the expansion of the activity approach, to prevent it from becoming an absolute: yes, activity permeates the entire human existence, however it is not its only basis or the most deep-lying level (V.Z. Kelle, G.S. Batyshchev).

The activity approach has both its possibilities and its limitations in the framework of other categories of historical materialism. However, the basis for the development and understanding of social life lies in the unity of activity and social relations, and not activity *per se* (V.Z. Kelle).

If V.Z. Kelle limits activity from the outside, so to speak (not everything can be deduced from this category — it is necessary but insufficient to explain social life), G.S. Batyshchev finds internal, deep-level limitations to activity. I would like to point out first of all two of his basic ideas — one concerning the threshold of deobjectification and the other concerning the harmonious system (systemic unity would be a better way to put it).

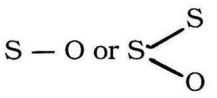
The threshold of deobjectification is the limit of accessibility of the content of objective reality for each given level of activity. According to G.S. Batyshchev, activity is "the mode of being for only below-threshold contents" while creativity shifts the deobjectification threshold. The above-threshold reality becomes accessible to the subject through a deep-level creative communication which is essentially a subject-to-subject and non-monological relation. Of course, from our point of view, it could be argued that creativity and communication are aspects and levels of activity, provided it is not reduced to an objective transformation of the object by the subject. However, for the time being, let us put the question of terminology aside. The important thing is that a level of reality is indicated which cannot be integrated into one system, directed by one subject (even though he would like to personify the noosphere) or evaluated in terms of one set of principles.

What is this — eclecticism or a reflection of the fact that the world is inherently a non-reducible polyphonic systemic unity revealing itself at the level of genuine communication (a systemic unity without one center or an overriding goal)? Batyshchev has formulated a very

interesting problem indeed.

He believes that it can be solved by making the transition from organic to harmonious systems. This is a clear break with the "mainline" Hegelian tradition where that which is real inevitably turns out to be reasonable and logic can unerringly reconstruct history.

We cannot agree with Batyshchev as regards defining the concrete scope of activity (this becomes clear if we note that what he speaks about is objective subject-object activity, when we refer to activity as a system of subject-object and subject-subject relations). However, we fully agree with him that such limits exist and that the diagram



like any categoric construct, has limited applicability — it cannot be used in all cases but only within a certain range of abstraction. Man also has other, extra-activity ways of interacting with the world.

Opinions I cannot accept...

1. First of all I cannot agree with a simplified understanding of activity when it is either reduced to one of its types (usually, the subject-object transformation) or one of its elements — action.

Work or action are quite explicitly declared to be the essence of the activity approach by A.V. Brushlinsky. As his first result, all he gets are conjunctions: "activity and interaction, activity and consciousness." Secondly, it turns out that there can be not only activity of a subject, but also activity of an organ (for example, the brain). True, people also speak about volcanic activity and words are polysemantic. Yet, can we indeed rely on action, in relation to which communication and consciousness are not immanent, and even more so on the action of an organ (even one as important as the brain) to explain man's mental life, let alone human existence? And if we cannot, then what is the relationship between particular word usage and philosophical analysis? A.V. Brushlinsky writes that in A.N. Leont'ev's diagram of activity "the following mutually related components are singled out: goals, motives, actions, operations, etc." It is incorrect in principle to separate these words with a comma and then to top it with an "etc." This is Leont'ev's diagram:

Activity	**motive**
Action	**goals**
(the result of the division of labor)	
Operations	**tasks**
(the result of the limitations generated by specific conditions)	

No matter how we understand the elements of this diagram, it is clear that activity is a complex hierarchical system of actions and operations which cannot be reduced to individual actions and be directly controlled by the goal alone.

A.L. Nikiforov also interprets Leont'ev's views rather loosely and defines activity very narrowly, as activeness aimed at attaining a consciously set goal. It is not difficult to see that if activity thus understood is adopted as an explanatory principle in a theory of human existence, then we shall not be able to move beyond rational enlightenment in practical work.

2. Let us not consider what "monism" stands for when activity understood as the subject-object transformation is declared the main and principle concept, the universal "cell" which reflects in a concentrated form the universal mode and specificity of human life (V.V. Davydov). From this point view, communication as the manifestation of social relations in a process that only provides a certain formal framework for the content of activity and the emergence of individual activity is only a process of the interiorization of joint activity. Indeed, a view worthy of a businessman: only create appropriate conditions for work and all the rest will follow, or, more precisely, will be stamped from the matrix of actions on the individual's *tabula rasa*. In this context it does not make sense to speak about the culture of communication, understanding one's own inner life or the self-value of spirituality — all this "lyricism" proves to be pointless, since it clearly lies beyond the objectification threshold of this view of the activity approach. In itself, the subject-object transformation cannot serve as a genetic or even less so as a functional basis for deducing and explaining all the complexity of human existence, since the "cell" must contain in itself the principal contradiction of the system. This contradiction can be found only in the relation

and never in the subsystem S — O. Under the latter approach monism turns into reductionism and action, in relation to which communication is only a form, leads not to subject-subject dialogue, but to subject-object manipulation.

3. I cannot accept it either when activity of a subject is dissolved in an objective impersonal process. This dissolution occurs in two ways: the "hard" way is when only the term is left of activity and its specific features (Y.K. Plentikov, A.L. Nikiforov) and the "soft" way when the unity of activity and objective processes and relations overshadow the special nature of activity, as it were (cf. V.Z. Kelle).

Indeed, in his text Y.K. Pletnikov focuses on the objective regularities of activity (which undoubtedly exist). He sees the special nature of activity only in that these objective regularities manifest themselves in

the form of the subject's actions at the level of the social form of the movement of matter. Pletnikov is sometimes criticized for wanting to deduce everything from activity. However, in fact, he deduces everything from the objective regularities of activity, while activity does not have its own basis and emerges only as the "otherness" of an impersonal process. A.L. Nikiforov explicitly states that the impersonal nature of activity is its important feature. For him, activity is "machine-like." It is indeed difficult to correlate this understanding of activity with the problem of activeness of the human factor. The essence of this problem lies in choice, free and open meaning-determination and goal-setting, and not just in the passive imitation of objective structures in the structure of activity. Actions and not activity can be automated since only technology can be formalized, and not the meanings of life, not axiology.

We cannot agree with V.Z. Kelle when he treats the unity of activity and objective relations as an absolute, without previously drawing a clear distinction between relevant concepts, when he regards as an absolute the genetically derivative nature of activity. True, the subject's activity does have an objective basis which is realized only through activity, i.e. opposites penetrate each other. True, today's activity is genetically determined by the objective actions of yesterday. However, the first of these statements, while being absolutely correct, does not reveal the specific contribution to the life of society by each of the opposites (activity and the process of natural history), and the second statement, while also being true, does not tell the whole story.

Still, in terms of the process of natural history, activity is only a form for the realization of an objective process, while in terms of activity objective conditions constitute a field for the realization of the meanings of life and the subject's principal values. (Incidentally, the almost total indifference of the authors to the axiological aspect of the problems being discussed is indeed remarkable.) These are not conditional aspects in the consideration, but real and mutually complementary aspects of human existence, and tension between these poles creates its antinomies and sources of development.

Today's activity is determined by the objective relations that already exist for the subject. However, won't tomorrow's objective relations carry the stamp of today's activity? And isn't this the essence of the problem of the human factor? In the 1890s, Engels already laid a theoretical basis for this in his letters on historical materialism. Along with the derivative nature of activity and the decisive role of the objective beginning, "in the final analysis" we should not forget that at each specific moment activity is independent: freedom is based on the awareness of the need, but man not only reflects, he also creates the world (V.I. Lenin).

4. Some involuntary skepticism concerning the term "activity approach" (V.S. Shvyrev, V.Z. Kelle, G.S. Batyshev) is disturbing. We are against treating this approach as an absolute. However in itself the concept "activity approach" (and the corresponding term) are as valid as,

for example, the concepts used in systems analysis, probability theory, humanities, natural history and other disciplines. Indeed, an approach is determined by the special nature of the object and the paradigm of its consideration. The activity approach is needed where there is activity and it analyzes relevant phenomena on the basis of the activity paradigm.

However, if this assumption is correct, then is V.S. Shvyrev justified in insisting on the opposition of the activity approach and the theory of activity? Up to a point an approach can exist without a theory in the strict sense of the word (we speak in plain language, not thinking about what it means), although broadly interpreted theoretical knowledge (resulting from the reflection of certain types of phenomena, processes or operations) can also provide some justification for a spontaneous approach. However, when an approach becomes the subject matter of a methodological analysis and is used deliberately as a method, its explanation, its ontological and methodological justification by a theory in the strict sense of the word becomes inevitable. It appears that the activity approach is currently going through precisely this phase: it urgently needs to be justified by the theory of activity. And what are we doing on the pages of this book if not discussing the problems and aspects of an emerging theory?!

Chapter 16

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

By V.Z. Kelle

The discussion of the problem of activity on the pages of this book has revealed some trends that for various reasons we should pay attention to. Among other things, we should take note of them because the treatment of the concept of activity that interests us in the system of categories of historical materialism cannot help reflecting different general philosophical approaches to its interpretation. Perhaps these trends themselves are not new, but today they get an added emphasis. Many authors, in an effort to grasp the deeper philosophical meaning of the concept of activity and to differentiate it from its everyday meaning, narrow the scope of its application and include features in its definition that deprive it of the notion of its universality, a property which, for example, E.G. Yudin believed to be central to it. He himself believed that "activity is a special human form of an active relation to the surrounding world, the content of which is goal-conforming transformation of this world on the basis of learning and developing the determinate forms of culture."[1]

Therefore, "universality" here only means that activity is a "specifically human" form of relation to the world. This provision directly follows from Theses on Feuerbach and raises no objections. The content of the concept is "narrowed" by defining what constitutes a "truly human" relation to the world, objectified in activity. N.S. Zlobin believes that the special character of this relation is that it is capable of goal-setting, of going beyond the already established relations of the object. V.S. Shvyrev sees it in man's ability to overcome the pressure of external circumstances and to formulate new programs of activity. Under this interpretation, universality of activity is not postulated from the very beginning, i.e., activity is not viewed as a universal feature of human activity at all times, even though it is present in it since society and culture develop. It is not accidental that Shvyrev agrees that the universalizaion of the category of activity should be treated with more care and linked primarily with the creation of culture.

For his part, G.S. Batyshchev restricts the applicability of the concept of activity by approaching it from the opposite angle, namely from creativity. Even though he does not deny that creativity is an act, he limits activity to the world that man has already explored. He states

explicitly that his approach invalidates the assumption that activity is a mode of man's existence, his culture, etc. A.L. Nikiforov goes even further in his treatment of activity as some machine-like activeness. Generally speaking, if we disregard a few nuances, we can say that the content of the category of activity is limited in two opposite ways. I am not addressing the authors' arguments here — their texts are in this book and I do not set myself the task of analyzing their views on the issue. I only wanted to compare their positions to demonstrate how little established the concept of activity still is, although a good deal has already been written on the subject. As for historical materialism, it appears that preserving the universality of the category of activity is important for it for methodological reasons. What is unacceptable is not that this concept is recognized as universal but that it is treated as an absolute. Proponents of the "activity approach" fairly often err in this when they use it to replace or repress the principles of both materialism and dialectics.

Of course, not every action, even a spontaneous one, is activity. Some researchers use this argument to demonstrate that the category of activity is limited. In our view, this is some misunderstanding. This is no way to discuss philosophical concepts. This is no way to solve philosophical problems. From the point of view of historical materialism, the philosophical meaning and universality of activity lie in the fact that people make history, that the historical process is the result of people's activity, that social reality cannot exist outside their activity and that social relations and laws of history exist and manifest themselves in various forms of activity.

Historical materialism is called upon to indicate ways toward a scientific study of history, i.e., to explain why people make history in this and not in some other way. This explanation is of course connected with the task of changing history since social sciences are stimulated by the requirements of revolutionary criticism and practical activity. Emphasis on changing the world does not mean giving up on the task of explaining it. For example, stagnation phenomena in our society accumulated alongside practical and theoretical problems. Not only were social sciences not promoted, their development was in fact slowed down, as can be clearly illustrated by sociology which for over two decades could not become institutionalized in our society while it is called upon to study and explain social processes taking place under socialism. On the whole, social sciences failed in their mission to understand the processes and laws inherent to socialism.

Perestroika has changed the situation radically. Society needed rapid progress in social sciences to make up for the past, to strengthen and promote their links and interaction with social practice. In other words, the situation generated by perestroika has proven an inspiration for developing an across-the-board development of social sciences. In this connection more rigorous demands are also made of the methodology

of science, its effectiveness and reliability. That is why it is very important and timely to consider methodological problems of social sciences, provided of course this goes hand in hand with practice and if new approaches to the social reality appear as a result.

These considerations fully apply to the methodological analysis of the problem of activity. There is no question that revealing the heuristic possibilities inherent in this concept will expand the arsenal of methods of historical materialism. I have already had occasion to state my views on the subject.[2] Given the importance of this task it is necessary to treat with care all proposals relating to the use of the concept of activity as a methodological principle of the materialistic understanding of history. Since this subject is raised by Y.K. Pletnikov, let us analyze his point of view.

Pletnikov regards activity as an initial category of historical materialism, i.e., its most basic, elementary and abstract concept. On the basis of this category, it is then possible to erect the entire theoretical edifice of historical materialism by ascending from the abstract to the concrete. The result of activity — its product — is a "cell" of historical materialism since social life itself emerges when human activity (labor) is objectified. This is the essence of his approach, briefly stated. I believe that nowhere near everything has been thought out here, and that a critical analysis of this position is in order. I shall attempt to fill in this gap.

First of all, we should clarify the origins of this view. Pletnikov probably took the commodity as a "cell" of commodity production and labor, producing use- and exchange value, and rejected their historical form. As a result he obtained product in place of commodity, and activity in place of concrete and abstract labor. The question arises, How valid is this operation? If in analyzing labor and its product we abstract ourselves from the historical form of commodity production, then what are we left with? It is well known that the initial assumption in Marxist analysis of commodity production is the recognition of the dual nature of labor and, consequently, of the dual nature of the commodity. However, the use-value of the latter is important for Marx only in one respect — as the material embodiment of value. The commodity becomes a phenomenon of economic life only because it represents value in a concentrated form. Thanks to this, products of labor of different quality appearing on the commodity market can be compared and exchanged. Therefore, the social (economic) features of a manufactured product do not follow from the fact that the product has been manufactured and satisfies a specific need, but are determined by the fact that it has been manufactured in a specific system of social relations which it embodies in a material form.

If we abstract ourselves from this economic form, then what we are left with is labor as such and the product as the result of this labor; what is left, therefore, is one aspect of labor — the ability to create a thing

useful to man, a use-value, and one aspect of the result of labor is that the product represents the material embodiment, the objectification of the knowledge, experience, skills and abilities of man. However concrete sociality as a systemic quality does not follow from this. At best, such an abstract view of labor and its product can help reveal the preconditions of sociality. But it does not disclose the mystery of its birth or its essence (by sociality in this case I mean the totality of social relations). That is why, in my view, this product cannot constitute a "cell" of social life. The abstraction from the commodity form of the product in this analysis leads to the abstraction from the social characteristic of labor and its product in general.

However a legitimate question arises here: Does this not result in the social form of labor being identified with the forms of commodity production? This result is unacceptable since the value forms and relations emerged in the course of history; they were preceded by subsistence farming. As for subsistence farming, Marx relates its sociality with different types of social organization that rest on the natural unity of labor with its physical prerequisites.[3] These can be different types of public (patrimonial, communal) property and in this case individuals are the co-owners of this property, or this can be private property, in which case individuals are independent owners. In the early stages of history, these forms sometimes combined, as Marx demonstrated in his analysis of the social forms that preceded capitalist production. However, "in both these forms the individuals relate not as workers but as proprietors — as members of a community (Gemeinwesen) who also work. The purpose of this labor is not the creation of value. . ." but "the maintenance of the individual proprietor and his family as well as of the community as a whole."[4] Therefore, social characteristics here are determined by people's relations to the conditions in which they produce and to each other, i.e., by the forms of property. People cannot produce without coming together, without entering into certain relations with each other. If we abstract ourselves from this consideration it is impossible to understand how social relations form in the process of labor.

Finally, to complete the picture, we should address, at least briefly, the following question: What social characteristics does people's creative activity acquire in science, art and other such spheres where it cannot be reduced to simple labor or to exchange value. At this point we are interested only in the social characteristics of labor and how they are formed if the quality of labor changes radically. In N.S. Zlobin's text, universal labor is considered rather thoroughly in the context of goal-setting. He is right in pointing out that characterizing labor as a universal category relates not only to the future but also to the present and the past since this involves labor as a positive creative activity. According to Marx, creative labor is universal labor, it is the creation of a unique product manufactured on the basis of the labor of one's predecessors and in cooperation with one's contemporaries. The concept of univer-

sal labor, therefore, reflects the social aspect of the creativity of culture and emerges as a social characteristic of labor as creativity.

It follows from this that neither labor itself nor its result can serve as the initial basis for the theoretical and methodological analysis of social life if they are abstracted from people's interaction. Man emerged as a social being and his social nature can be derived only from people's relations with each other. Historical materialism proves that at each historical stage in the development of society these relations do not emerge spontaneously and that they conform to laws since they are determined by the objective material conditions of their existence.

In this connection another objection arises against considering activity as the initial category of historical materialism. Man is the subject of activity. Zlobin believes that the principle of activity highlights this subjective characterization of man. I cannot but agree with this statement. However, in elaborating a system of categories of historical materialism, we should proceed from the objective to the subjective, from being to consciousness, and not the other way around. A materialistic understanding of history is so complex because it is based on the recognition of objective laws and necessary relations that exist and manifest themselves in activity and, at the same time, determine it. Without a dialectical approach, it appears impossible to overcome the difficulties that arise here.

Thus, the principle of activity is of fundamental importance to historical materialism. However, activity cannot be its initial category since it is not elementary, but is a rather complex entity that must be appropriately interpreted in terms of materialism and dialectics.

1. Yudin E.G. Systemic Approach and Activity Principle. Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1978, pp. 267-268. (In Russian)
2. Voprosy Filosofii (Questions of Philosophy). 1985, No 3.
3. Marx K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 28. Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1986, p. 399.
4. Ibid., p. 399.

Chapter 17

TERMINOLOGICAL DISCORDANCE AND/OR CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

By N.S. Zlobin

I believe that we can have a fruitful discussion of the concept of activity (activity principle, approach, relation, etc.) just as, incidentally, of any other category, when we have a single methodological basis which can be used to define its essence, to reveal how much it is needed in a series of specific categories, the scope of its application, etc. Unfortunately, so far this condition has not been met which, *inter alia*, can be clearly seen from the discussion of activity problems by the authors of the articles in this collection. And this is not only because of the different levels of studies in this publication where philosophical analysis is presented alongside views from specific disciplines.

In my opinion, the authors' positions have been distorted by those factors which V.S. Shvyrev rightly characterizes as the underlying basis for the recent skepticism concerning the constructive potential of the concept of activity. Moreover, to a certain extent the authors themselves "represent" these factors.

In particular, in my opinion, this statement applies to the text by G.S. Batyshchev. In the article, if one disregards the plethora of critical remarks concerning the universalization of activity, which are totally beside the point and addressed to no one in particular (and they account for about one-third of the text), activity problems are in fact reduced to subject-object relations defined in terms of "need determinism." The subject-subject relation is placed outside activity or (which is essentially the same thing) is reduced to types of external communication and on this basis opposed to creative activity. This is done in a purely declaratory manner by way of introducing the term "above-threshold activity" and asserting on a take-it-or-leave-it basis that something just "cannot be done" as part of activity. Probably because the author felt the need to make his declaratory assertion less categorical, from numerous points of view on activity he, I believe, deliberately did not choose the philosophical categorization of activity for his critical analysis but rather a definition proposed by V.P. Zinchenko for a specific

discipline and used his criticism of its (systemic) limitations in philosophical terms to justify his claim that the activity approach in general is limited and "below-threshold."

I think Batyshchev could have noted that different levels and concepts are confused and substituted for one another here. The focus of the author's criticism is one-way self-interest, the "self-measure" of an active subject in relation to the object, i.e. the openness of a narrowly understood activity taken for activism as a value-in-itself. Formulated in these terms, the author's approach is of course indefensible. If he came to the conclusion that it was necessary to differentiate between creativity and such expanding activism by continuing to interpret activity in the sense of a particular discipline or by reducing it to the ongoing, ultimately one-quality action (even though I do not understand why this should be done in place of defending the philosophical meaning of the activity principle), it would be a simple matter of terminological transformations or even simply an argument over words.

Is not the author's position here the reverse side of his previously held extreme views which turned into an absolute (all the way to the total exclusion of objectivity), precisely the subject-subject relations in activity? This thought is prompted by the author's present position, which regards subject-subject relations, excluded from activity, as ultimately the relation "man — Universe," in which the Universe, although still regarded as objective (described as the "other subject") is not recognized as an object.

For a number of reasons such a position gives rise to more than terminological doubts, raising conceptual objections:

1. G.S. Batyshchev argues against the universalization of activity as the "madness of collective outism" or "self-deification," and proposes man's "co-authorship" with the Universe. However if under this interpretation the Universe is taken as the other subject and considering that it presents to us its objective dialectics, to quote his phrase, the "unobtrusive grandeur of the trends of cosmogenesis," and on top of that he interprets objectivity as limited "grounded" "self-interested" activity, the author forces us to recognize human subjectivity as the otherness of the absolute spirit.

2. This is also supported by another point the author makes in passing concerning "harmonious systems." In his view, these systems can "incorporate" contents that cannot be transcended and enter into parity relations with them. But, first of all, when a content that is not transcended is indeterminate and correlation with any "minimally constructive condition" indeterminateness constitutes its definition and thereby its transcendence (any other correlation with indeterminateness will simply not constitute a relation). Secondly, bearing in mind that the universe is boundless and inexhaustible, such untranscended "incorporation" of its content clearly cannot be objective and sensory and, consequently, may emerge only as their purely spiritual otherness (since

spiritual and practical activity only increases the bewilderment since any result of practical activity aimed at changing nature and society is inevitably also the result of spiritual activity. On the other hand, spiritual activity in the sphere of religion, art, ethics, etc. is by no means limited only to the formation of the mind; it also shapes a certain style and stereotype of man's behavior.

From my point of view, Pletnikov proposes a use of the concept of activity so broad that it loses its categoric definiteness and is relegated to the status of a term in a particular scientific discipline or even to a commonly used word.

Using activity, understood as social practice and as a generic concept in relation to labor, as a basis for the theoretical analysis of historical reality, Y.K. Pletnikov considers the activity approach in the theoretical cognitive framework thereby denying activity problems the status of a special principle. This is seen most clearly when the author turns to the analysis of basic economic elements of the development of society since activity here inevitably emerges in the sense of a particular discipline. It would seem that this approach leaves no room for the question of differentiation between an activity-based study of the development of society and its analysis as a natural historical process. Pletnikov nevertheless makes this distinction by identifying two theoretical levels of historical materialism and asserting that activity-based consideration reveals the essence of the first order and the consideration of the development of society as a natural historical process, the essence of the second order.

To justify his position, the author has to resort to assertions that I find strange, namely:

1. that the "natural historical process of the development of society depends not on people's consciousness or will but on their activity" and that "people's activity as its result necessarily acquires features of the laws of natural history." However, first of all, this once again signifies that activity is viewed irrespective of consciousness and, secondly, that any differences between the indicated "levels" are eliminated altogether, because not the development of society, but activity itself is characterized in terms of natural history;

2. that the consideration of the two aspects of historical reality would amount to the recognition of the two aspects of historical materialism and would exclude their unity in real history;

3. that it is possible to integrate the essence of the first and the essence of the second orders, as if these "orders" reflected different essences and a deeper insight into one and the same essence. And if this is true, then how can they be integrated?

4. that the idea of the social form of the movement of matter does not have gnosiological significance, since it equally reflects both social being and social consciousness. However, in this case describing it as the movement of matter becomes pointless because matter in any of its

sensory perception is necessarily a "transformation," a transcendence).

3. While Batyshchev is justified in highlighting the problem of deobjectification, at the same time he totally separates it from objectification. It follows from his position that deobjectification should be attributed not to that in which human essence has already been objectified in one way or another, but to the contents of the objective world *per se*. However, in this case society and mankind emerge only as a "monosubject" who "communicates with the Universe at a deep level." The Universe cannot obtain any information concerning the contents of human subjectivity since they are not objectified (at least in ideal objects) and objectivity present in activity does transmit these contents because activity, in Batyshchev's view, is "selfish." Hence, man's essence in axiological terms can be described only as a path which shall never be travelled to the end or determined "from below" (i.e., by any discrete historically definite states), as an endless constant yearning. In general, this would be correct applied to an ideal, if it were not separated from determinism "from below" — from the preconditions of previous development. The fact is that yearning inevitably presupposes a desire not only to get "somewhere," but also to get away from "somewhere." Otherwise it would be equivalent to rest.

4. I believe that all this is the result of the attempt to consider activity problems outside the context of communication, by abstracting them from it. This results in assertions, as in Batyshchev's writing, for example, about subjectless activity. He believes, for instance, that deobjectification is carried out by activity and not by an active subject. A.L. Nikifotrov turns all this into an absolute which is equivalent to an absurdity. It also explains the confusion of the spheres of activity (production, management, etc.) with activity itself. Another aspect of this problem is the separation of communication from activity. The characterization of communication proposed by Batyshchev raises no objections. However, if it is interpreted as non-objective and non-activity-related it can be reduced to spiritualism.

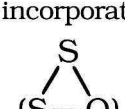
Of course, I have applied my own "yardstick" in the above analysis, being a proponent of the philosophical interpretation of activity and all activity-related problems (not reduced to the subject-object relation and user activism). This understanding inherently incorporates subject-to-subject and person-to-person communication which can be represented in the context of an infinite series "objectification — deobjectification — objectification . . ." and presupposes therefore a constantly renewable process of de-universalization of the object and the universalization of the subject in the co-authorship, in joint creative activity with other people regarded as subjects. Proceeding from this "selfish" position, I have to make a case for the validity of the concepts of creative and revolutionary activity which are rejected according to Batyshchev's logic. I have to prove that it is precisely in his objective activity that man acquires the ability and opportunity to go beyond the "threshold" of any

manifestations is not the reflection of consciousness. On the other hand, the concept of social being, contrary to what the author asserts, inherently incorporates elements of consciousness too (and significant elements at that). What is important to understand is that social being is reflected not just in consciousness, but in social consciousness which, being interwoven into social practice, itself acquires extrapersonal forms of being.

The essence of all these objections is, in my opinion, that the activity principle is a specific aspect of the analysis of the historical process, distinct from the gnosiological approach. If within the framework of the latter, social development is viewed in its objective characteristics as a natural historical process, in the framework of the former it is regarded in terms of how the subject is represented, i.e., as a cultural and historical process. That is why activity problems cannot be extended, for example, to political economy where the term "activity" is used in the everyday sense. Of course, a subject is also assumed in the consideration of the natural historical process, but in an impersonal objectified form — as classes, masses, society, i.e., in the context of socio-historical practice. On the other hand, in the framework of the cultural historical process, the subject (active subject) is the personality, i.e. the social individual in so far as he has acquired his human species essence and realizes himself as a personality. Of course, these two aspects of analysis of social development are not isolated. That is why we speak about one theory of the historical process, i.e. not about two different theories, but about revealing the dialectic of social development in historical materialism.

However, if we ignore the difference between the subjective essence of social practice as it manifests itself in the activity of society, classes, etc., and as it emerges in the activity of the personality, then it is impossible to reveal fully the dialectic of social development. And it follows from this that we can add content to activity problems only by analyzing the development of society as a natural historical process, as in fact happens in reality — in the development of historical materialism.

This problem is addressed by V.N. Sagatovsky and V.Z. Kelle. Neither authors is consistent enough in his analysis of the essence of the subjective activity. They attribute it in equal measure both to society and the personality, even though they speak about substantive communication, i.e., about the subject-subject relation as inherent to the activity relation. That is why, in his text, V.N. Sagatovsky presents the subject-to-subject aspect of activity as incorporated into subject-object relations,



whereas, following the logic of his own analysis, in my view, the following diagram would be correct

system-determined norms, i.e., to create his own world, not "using" but exploring the Universe.

In contrast to Batyshchev, Y.K. Pletnikov adopts as his initial assumption the view that activity emerges as the only possible mode of existence and development of social activity. At the same time the reduction of activity to labor has doubtful validity, particularly since it identifies essentially different characteristics of labor: labor as positive creative activity is in fact a feature of universal labor and labor as a process during which man regulates his exchange of substances with nature is a characterization of labor viewed in its most simple and abstract terms which, according to Marx, are not related to any forms of sociality. This, incidentally, eventually leads the author to what I find to be a strange conclusion that "taken by itself, separately from other social entities, the product of human labor represents. . .a 'cell' of social life. . . ." However, I believe that the product (result) of labor "taken by itself" by definition contains no social meaning and consequently cannot represent this "cell." It does not contain all social contradictions in itself; in fact, it does not contain any social contradictions in any form. It acquires the definition of sociality only in the social process of production (which incorporates distribution, exchange and consumption). That is why Marx adopts as a basis not labor and not the product, but the commodity, i.e., not the labor act itself, and even less so its result, but both one and the other placed in the context of social interaction.

Incidentally, the "objectified result of human labor, its real product," does not correspond to other criteria of the "cell of social life," mentioned by Y.K. Pletnikov, either. The product of labor "taken by itself" is by no means necessarily a "repeated mass phenomenon." However, even if this were the case, the product of labor as a repeated mass phenomenon does not necessarily have to be directly perceived by the senses (as, for example, the result of the work of a philosopher, a mathematician, a lawyer, etc.), provided of course objectivity is not identified with a material thing.

I do not think that Pletnikov is correct in establishing an identity between activity and not only labor, but also social practice, particularly since a third identity follows from these two — that between social practice and labor. Then why are a number of terms needed to express one concept? It appears strange but the content of Pletnikov's concept of "practical activity" is essentially the same as Batyshchev's understanding of activity, although, as has already been stated, their initial assumptions are opposite.

Indeed, the author opposes practical activity to spiritual activity, admitting, by the logic of things, that practical activity is non-spiritual and asserts that practical activity does not deal with changing people's minds, i.e., that this process is not embraced by practice. The qualification concerning the complementarity of practical and spiritual activity does not take care of the concept of practical activity, which in itself is relative. The author's appeal to the characterization of the results of

(where T stands for the thing which represents the interaction of the subject and the object), precisely because the author highlights the significance of substantive communication in analyzing the activity principle.

In my opinion, Kelle allows a broad interpretation of activity in his text (in relation to the intrinsic logic the author himself follows) because he writes that intellectual and physical labor, and political and organizational-managerial activity are "all specific forms and types of activity as a generic concept." It seems that all these are spheres in the functioning of society where activity is represented in so far as man emerges in them in his personal subjective aspect.

In his article A.V. Brushlinsky considers activity in the context of the problems and categories of psychology. And it seems to me that he should have qualified the specific nature of this concrete scientific context (i.e., how this context affects the very understanding of activity and not only the subject-matter of the research, as Brushlinsky does). The text suggests that his understanding is significantly narrower than the views expressed in philosophy. In particular, it may be concluded from the text that the author reduces activity to an ongoing action and, analyzing the "thinking activity," he regards it as a process in the head of one individual and, although this presupposes communication, he places it "outside the brackets" of activity and activity problems in general.

V.V. Davydov attempted to define the specificity of analyzing activity in the framework of psychology. It appears however that in the heat of the polemics he was to some extent captivated by the logic of his opponents who oppose activity to communication. The author relies on Y.K. Pletnikov's approach (concerning the elementary "cell"), under which the psychological consideration activity appears to be more justified, although not quite correct. In this context, the question of "deducing" the concept of communication from activity appears to be appropriate with the proviso that activity occurs only in communication, i.e., that activity presupposes communication and is inherent in it. The author himself comes to this conclusion, considering consciousness in activity as consciousness, and activity itself as uniting people in a common process, in mutual production and realization of abilities.

Taking this into account, the following points appear to be highly doubtful:

1. The assertion that it is inadmissible to compare directly creative labor and creative communication. It appears that in general both these categories can be regarded only in actual unity. Creative communica-

tion outside activity would be devoid of its subject (of course, provided activity is not understood only as technological interaction with nature or simply as labor);

2. The assertion that it is possible to define the concept of activity on the basis of the preconditions that exist in the animal world. It seems to me that it follows from the author's own text that activity is a purely social process, i.e., something fundamentally different from the psyche and behavior of animals. Incidentally, this is the thrust of E.V. Ilyenkov's work relating to these problems. V.V. Davydov relies on Ilyenkov's philosophical legacy in his research.

I.T. Kasavin highlights the creative essence of activity. However, I find that the author resorts to definitions that contradict his own conclusions, in particular, when he uses the term activity in the sense of an action that is a process. One of the reasons why in Kasavin's writing the use of the term activity lacks rigor is the unfounded identity he establishes between the goal-conforming and goal-setting aspects and the consequent excessively rigid linkage between activity and need. At the same time, when the author eventually states his position, it may be concluded that, in the framework of the activity-based relation, the process does not "wane" in the product, but that the product is only a moment in the process since the gratification of the need constitutes the emergence of a new need (and ability). In other words, of greatest importance here (as distinct from the consideration of labor in economic terms) is the need for activity itself.

Chapter 18

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAN'S INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD

By A.V. Brushlinsky

I agree with those who believe that it is especially important to reveal the role and significance of activity in the entire life of people and, in accordance with this, to determine the place of the category of activity in the system of philosophical, sociological, psychological, etc. categories and concepts. V.V. Davydov, for instance, discusses this problems in most pointed terms. I agree with many of his assumptions, while others I find debatable. Thus, in his view, in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, activity emerges as a basic category and in psychology this concept cannot be placed alongside other psychological concepts since it must be the primary initial principal notion among them. In my opinion, these provisions call for some clarification.

The activity that we speak about here never exists without a subject, without an agent who engages in it. Activity is the principal mode of man's interaction with the outside world. Therefore, the initial and the most fundamental element is not activity itself but precisely this interaction, i.e., man in his inseparable relation with the surrounding reality which he contemplates, understands, transforms, etc. Under this approach, activity, first of all, does not obscure the subject or force him into the background and, secondly, it is not opposed to the above-mentioned interaction. Paradoxically as it may sound, attempts to obscure and force the agent into the background are still frequent in our literature. All this must be taken into account in elaborating the activity approach according to which man and his mind are shaped, developed and reveal themselves in activity (initially practical activity). This activity can only be independent and at least minimally creative. These features of activity highlight its inseparable non-disjunctive relation with the subject (with the individual, a group of people, etc.), and they also help reveal its objective content. The objectivity of activity does not negate but, on the contrary, presupposes its subjectivity (or subjectness), i.e., that it is performed by a subject. Only man in the course of his activity understands and consciously transforms the objective reality. Thereby in the course of his social and historical development, laws of nature and society become accessible to scientific investigation and

practical use.

As I continue to compare my point of view with V.V. Davydov's position, I would like to stress specifically that my approach to activity, which I regard as the interaction of man with the world, by no means signifies that I reduce this interaction to activity alone. This is especially significant for a correct understanding of the role of the subject and the determination of his entire life. In the course of his activity, man creates and discovers new and highly significant factors for the continuation and development of life, yet this does not signify that life unfolds as a self-determining process. Many other highly significant external and internal preconditions and determinants go far beyond the scope of activity, exist prior to and are dependent upon it. Among such external conditions are elemental forces, unavoidable and unpredictable cataclysms (for example, earthquakes). Among the internal preconditions, let us mention hereditary and innate anatomical, physiological and psychophysiological features which a specific individual has even before he engages in activity. They necessarily, albeit not fatally, influence in a specific way activity emerging and developing in an individual and themselves undergo a significant transformation in the process. Man's entire development unfolds only in the course of continuing interaction of external and internal conditions, preconditions, etc.

Man's interaction with the world is never reducible to activity; moreover this interaction begins even before any specific individual engages in activity. Under our hypothesis concerning possible prenatal (intrauterine) emergence of the human mind, the most elementary mental phenomena begin to appear even before a baby is born under the impact of his first external stimuli (sonar, etc.) and on the basis of relevant innate characteristics.[1] Some of the most recent experiments conducted in the United States and other countries make this hypothesis even more probable today. Thus it becomes clear that at the end of the prenatal period when the yet unborn individual begins to interact with the outside world, elementary mental phenomena may already appear even though the baby has not yet engaged in any activity or performed even the most simple actions.

Our hypothesis demonstrates that man's interaction with the outside world is not reducible to the subject's activity alone and makes it possible to highlight one of the deficiencies of the interiorization theory used by A.N. Leont'ev, P.Y. Galperin, V.V. Davydov and others to analyze the problem of activity. In accordance with this theory, mental phenomena are generated by and emerge through the interiorization of external activity, i.e. mental processes are essentially nothing more than the subject's external material actions transposed in the ideal plane and transformed there.

However, in terms of the above-mentioned theory which regards mental phenomena as a continuing process (this theory is a version of the activity approach), a serious difficulty immediately arises here

because of the disruption in the very emergence of the mental aspect. If the mental aspect is indeed generated through the interiorization of objective activity, then it would seem (in accordance with the logic of the theory which we criticize), that in the beginning of this activity there are no mental components, not even the most elementary ones, involved in regulating it. In other words, the initial "pre-mental" and "non-mental" activity eventually generates mental phenomena. This contradiction reflects a disruption in the line of development of the mental aspect and cannot be resolved in principle because the interiorization theory takes insufficient account of the highly significant and even obvious consideration that any activity by man, any of his even most elementary practical actions (as distinct from purely physiological reactions) always necessarily have as their constituent elements at least the most simple mental phenomena which regulate and affect them from the very beginning. This point is highlighted by the hypothesis concerning the prenatal emergence of the human mind, a hypothesis which is untenable in principle in terms of the interiorization theory.

The above considerations remain valid with respect to the new interpretation of interiorization being developed by V.V. Davydov. In his view, the emergence of individual activity within and on the basis of joint activity is a process which should be called interiorization. It is true that the intricate dialectic of joint and individual activity must be studied more thoroughly in all disciplines studying man. In particular, psychologists have not been paying attention to this fundamental problem. At the same time, in the interiorization theory, this issue marks the transition from the external to the internal, i.e., from an external action (which allegedly initially does not contain mental elements) to an internal action (which already contains a mental aspect). If we extend this logic (from the external which is initially totally devoid of any internal, to the internal generated by this external) to the interrelation between joint and individual activity, do we not once again run into an irreconcilable contradiction: at first there was only joint activity (without individual) and only eventually, individual (generated by this joint activity)?! In reality, joint activity does not exist prior to or without individual activities, and the latter does not form only as the result of the former (the reference here is to modern adults and children as well as to any kind of "cooperation" between them). In other words, the dialectic of these interrelations is indeed very complex. What then is the meaning of interiorization in this case? Where do we have the external, where the internal, and where, the transition from the first to the second? Speaking more generally, do we need to use here the term and concept "interiorization," in itself by no means indisputable?

The general conclusion is as follows: from the very start the tradition and popular concept of interiorization severs the external and the internal and then correlates them on a purely superficial basis. In reality, the initial and always inseparable interrelation between them is inherent

not only in the subject's activity but, in general terms, to man's interaction with the outside world (a subject with a subject, with an object, etc.).

The problem of activity is one of the aspects of the problem of man (interacting with the world). It reflects the principal, although not the only, level of this interaction. In other words, activity can be correctly understood only within this interaction and in relation to its other levels. In both cases it is especially important to use what V.N. Sagatovsky calls the method of categoric oppositions. For activity, such oppositions (pairs of categories) in different systems of connections and relations are different, relevant levels of man's interaction with the world. It is, for example, the mental as a process or mental activity. It is communication as well as behavior (not in the behavioristic sense, but as a system of actions, central to which is their moral content). It is also contemplation understood not as a synonym of passivity and inaction, but as man's special esthetic cognitive relation to the world.[2] It is clear that the list of such pairs of categories can and should be continued. Only then will activity reveal its true nature.

1. For more details, see: Brushlinsky A.V. Innate Preconditions of Man's Mental Development. Moscow, 1977, pp. 40-47. (In Russian)
2. For more details, see: Rubinshtein S.L. Elements of General Psychology. Moscow, 1964, p. 537 ff.; Rubinshtein S.L. Problems of General Psychology. Moscow, 1973, pp. 342-343, 350, 378 ff. (All in Russian)

Chapter 19

PROBLEMS OF ACTIVITY AS A MODE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AND THE PRINCIPLE OF MONISM

By V.V. Davydov

Many authors in this collection of articles expound the philosophical content of the category of activity and its role in historical materialism. Let us single out the provisions that are significant for modern psychology. First of all, there is the provision that the special nature of historical reality is represented by the subject-object reality. The mode of existence and development of this reality is human activity which is in unity with social relations. Its initial and universal form is people's labor activity. The category of activity marks the beginning of the ascension from the abstract to the concrete in elaborating a theory of historical materialism (Y.K. Pletnikov). In our view, the arguments against this provision (V.Z. Kelle) appear to be unconvincing.

The most significant special feature of activity is its transforming and goal-setting nature, which enables the subject to go beyond the framework of any situation, to rise above the determination it sets and to place it in a broader context of being, thereby finding a means that goes beyond the possibilities of a given determination. On a constant and unlimited basis, activity exceeds its underlying "programs" (that is why it cannot be limited by the transformation of the existent being in accordance with already established cultural norms and "programs"). This reveals the inherent openness and universality of activity. Activity should be understood as a form of historical cultural creativity (V.S. Shvyrev). In the universal transformation of nature and social reality, man emerges as the subject of his own development. The essence of human activity lies in goal-setting and creation (N.S. Zlobin).

These provisions (as well as a number of others contained in this publication) are in keeping with the approach adopted by many psychologists in developing the basic assumptions of their discipline because, on the one hand, they correspond to their own understanding of activity as the universal mode of people's social life and, on the other, they conform to the vast factual material which they have accumulated.

At the same time, it is necessary to consider a number of G.S.

and relations of objects. G.S. Batyshchev believes that the "need-determinism" of activity, understood as the subject's "self-measure," as his "self-interest," hampers man's ability to deobjectify the essence of the object, regardless of its functional usefulness.

First of all it should be borne in mind that all human needs have social and historical origins — they define an individual subject in the world as a human-species being. The "subject's self-measure" with regard to objects is his "self-measure" of such human-species wants and needs as in no way can be squeezed into the narrow framework of self-interest and sheer usefulness (although it is known that some subjects over the course of history developed such needs). Truly human species needs are based on man's desire for morality, values and intellectual gratification (taken, for example, in painting and music). People engaged in creative work have the need to create and the realization of this drive knows no bounds. According to Marxist theory, in creating (producing) a world of objects by his practical activity, man proves himself as a species-being, who produces (creates) universally in accordance with the standard of every species, applying everywhere the inherent standard to the object.[1] And if this is so, then what reason is there for presenting creative activity, which has a corresponding need as its basis, as something that "edits" and transforms the subject to its own "standard," irrespective of his inherent standard?

There are no grounds for this assumption provided of course man's needs and activity are clearly distinguished from animal needs and behavior. Making this distinction, Marx pointed out that animals also produce but an animal produces one-sidedly, only under the dominion of its immediate physical need in accordance with its physical body and only in accordance with the standard of the species to which it belongs.[2] It is strange that G.S. Batyshchev does not draw precisely this distinction while he ascribes to the activity approach, taking into account the role and significance of human species needs, a certain "collective outism" and "anthropocentrism."

This unfounded criticism emanates from "need determinism" present in activity. However, how does G.S..Batyshchev envisage universal "deep-level communication between subjects" without a corresponding human-species need? Need determination must be present in every kind of communication; it is a different matter how to determine its special nature and the nature of its connection with a specific type of activity (it should be said that the psychology of human needs is as yet little developed).

Let us observe that Marx thought much of the role of human needs in social production because they posit their objects ideally.[3] Need is a necessary component of people's creative labor activity and this component precedes and determines the real production of objects. Perhaps G.S. Batishchev shall call social production, too, a manifestation of "collective outism" and "anthropocentrism"?

Batyshchev's provisions which, in our view, distort the content of the category of activity. Batyshchev believes that the development of human activity as an organic system occurs through the assimilation of multi-level content of a different kind, transcended in a reduced form. Activity is characterized by monological development that does not allow other kinds of beginnings under equal conditions. From his point of view, activity does not embrace spheres of human existence which are related to the multi-level communication between subjects that cannot be reduced to one another as a matter of principle. This subject-to-subject communication is intended for mystery problems that are solved through creativity which therefore is not inherent to activity. The extrapolation of activity to multilevel communication, to processes of creativity result in its vulgarization because it is not the only specific mode of man's existence or the all-embracing mode of his relation with the world.

These provisions by G.S. Batyshchev are directly aimed against the principle of monism in elaborating the theory of human existence. They presuppose the existence of two of its beginnings that are not reducible to one another — communication as the basis for creativity and activity. "Non-reducibility" here emerges as a counterbalance to the monistic "reducibility." Yet this is precisely where eclecticism logically originates, a method already refuted in materialistic dialectics.

In reality any organic system, including activity, develops not by reducing multi-level structures to a common denominator, but by going precisely the opposite way — through generating from a certain "cell" diverse phenomena unlike one another. At the same time, their distinct identity does not rule out the possibility that in terms of their genetic origin they are in unity. This provision can be regarded as a general feature of the monistic description of development. In elaborating the theory of development, this description corresponds to the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete.

This method recognizes the abstract general beginning in the development of an organic system from which multi-level special and unique concrete entities emerge and form,in themselves not reducible to one another. It is possible to trace mentally their inherent connection (or unity) with the initial beginning only by revealing the complex chain of mediations regarded as knots of equally diverse contradictions. That is why the opposition between the development of an organic system and the presence in being of numerous "non-reducible" structures can either indicate a serious logical mistake or the rejection of monism in elaborating a theory with the help of dialectical logic.

However, at present it is very difficult to preserve the monism of a theory in which the universal (and consequently the only) basis of people's being is their activity, since, in our view, very little research has been carried out so far into the genetically initial primary form of human activity, the inseparability of its social nature and the peculiar individual

realization, its inherent unity with creativity. The connection between primary creative labor activity and people's material communication has been little-studied. Science has little factual material to characterize the historical process of the division of labor which led to the emergence of relatively autonomous spheres of material and intellectual production. Their subsequent development led to the concentration of the creative and highly individualized communication in intellectual production. This narrowed the creative strata and resulted in poor communication in material production, although historically the latter was the primary form of creative labor activity.

As a result of all this, the activity-based theory of human existence gradually degenerates and the famous provisions by the classics of Marxism concerning the creative nature of work and its role in social development turn into stock defensive formulas. In elaborating theoretical constructs, the temptation has arisen to aim primarily at the "elite," at the "few" individuals involved in creative communication who are not "reducible" to one another and actually exist in the sphere of highly developed intellectual production. The activity basis of this communication has grown so profoundly mediated by the "subject-to-subject relations" that it has become possible to ignore it and even to assert: "to be is to communicate" (G.S. Batyshchev). For comparison, let us recall that the clever idealist Hegel believed that "to be is to act" and the champions of dialectical materialism Marx and Engels had ample reason to believe that "to be is to work."

The deficiency of the activity-based theory of creativity also manifests itself in the following: today few specialists analyze and use in their works on man's creative potential Marx's ideas regarding the conditions for universal (or creative) labor in the sphere of the material production. (In this publication N.S. Zlobin espouses these views.) At the same time, a scientific investigation of the link between the initial forms of labor and creativity, of modern material production and creative work is at best at a standstill.

It should be pointed out that G.S. Batyshchev is not very clear in describing the connection between creativity and communication. Moreover, he sometimes correlates creative communication and deobjectification, while many experts have good reason to believe that creativity is mainly realized in objectification, when man creates the objective and social world. Incidentally, G.S. Batyshchev, suddenly breaking the general line of his arguments, introduces the term "deed" in his article in the context of his "extra-activity and supra-activity," making it very hard indeed to grasp these hair-splitting terminological distinctions.

A part of his paper is devoted to a critical analysis of the psychological views on the structure of activity that are closely related to A.N. Leont'ev's theory. In accordance with this theory, activity is always determined by need and activity itself is typically identified with the features

Such reproaches can be addressed to the activity approach only when it has remained abstract and undeveloped for a long time and when it cannot be used as a basis for deducing and explaining, for example, the inherent connection between labor and the need to create. However, labor is an inherent attribute of socialized mankind, the supreme creation of the Universe, and only in this aspect of the activity approach to human existence can an element of anthropocentrism be perceived, if one wants to see one.

The text by A.V. Brushlinsky addresses serious theoretical problems that relate to the unity of non-continuity and continuity in man's mind, the correlation of processes and actions, etc., in it. Unable to analyze them here in detail, I shall only make the following point: I cannot agree with the assertion that mental activity comprises continuous processes and discrete actions that emerge on the basis of processes as secondary mental structures. First of all, action itself can be perceived of as a process; secondly, it is precisely action that is considered to be the basic unit of mental activity in principal psychological theories (see, for example, S.L. Rubinshtein's theory). In our opinion, this aspect of the problem needs further study and clarification.

A.V. Brushlinsky also addresses another question that relates to the history of Soviet psychology. He says that L.S. Vygotsky did not elaborate on the problem of activity even though he used the word "activity" quite often. Let us consider the question raised by A.V. Brushlinsky on its merits.

Both Soviet and foreign scholars are correct in believing that Vygotsky was one of the founders of Marxist psychology, with activity being its basic category. Could he have become one if he had not studied the problem of activity? A.N. Leont'ev who knew his teacher's works, in the year of Vygotsky's death wrote the following: "L.S. Vygotsky's view of the mediated structure. . .of the mental aspect as human activity served as the cornerstone and a basis for the entire scientific psychological theory which he elaborated — the theory of socio-historical. . .development of human's mind."[4]

Vygotsky himself, when he analyzed social relations as a source of a child's mental development, linked them with "collective social activity."[5] The analysis demonstrates that the meaning of the concept of social situation of the child's development, which he introduced, coincides with the notion of leading activity that Leont'ev used. It should also be mentioned that Vygotsky used the concept of "psychological tool" as a notion directly analogous to the "material tools" that are used in Marxist theory to characterize labor activity.

Underlying Vygotsky's use of the word activity was a corresponding concept and in his cultural-historical theory it had considerable significance. V.S. Shvyrev brings this point into focus when he specifically points out the correct distinction Vygotsky made between animal behavior and man's activity on the basis of free goal-setting inherent

in the latter.[6] Of course, he had a different understanding of activity, compared to modern psychology, but we believe that he captured its essence accurately. For example, labor and the use of tools during labor constituted specifically human activity.[7]

Thus, an analysis of the texts in this collection of articles demonstrates that a number of authors developing a monistic theory of human existence rely on the category of activity. The difficulties inherent in the elaboration of such a theory are one of the reasons for the views that activity cannot be a universal basis for human existence and these views in fact form the foundation for an eclectic approach to it. An elaborate monistic philosophical and psychological theory of social being presupposes an intense and in-depth investigation of the historical evolution of activity and its ontogenetical development, which is the basis for the emergence and formation of man's communication, consciousness and personality.

1. Marx, K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 3, New York, International Publishers, 1975, pp. 276-277.
2. Marx, K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 3, New York, International Publishers, 1975, pp. 276-277.
3. Marx, K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 29, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1986, p. 29.
4. A.N. Leont'ev. Selected Psychological Works. Vol.1, Moscow, Pedagogika Publishers, p. 19. (In Russian)
5. L.S. Vygotsky. Selected Psychological Works. Moscow, 1956, p. 449. (In Russian)
6. L.S. Vygotsky. Collected Works. Moscow, 1983, Vol. 3, p. 72. (In Russian)
7. Ibid., p. 56.

Part 3

Replies to Criticism

Chapter 20

A SERIOUS CONCEPTUAL PROBLEM AND NOT SCHOLASTIC THEORIZING

By V.S. Shvyrev

As should have been expected, the focus of my discussion is on questions that relate to understanding the essence of activity and revealing the meaning of the category of activity. This is only natural because it is an objective fact that in our philosophy and in social sciences and the humanities, the category of activity is used as one of their basic concepts. This has already become an unquestionable tradition and no matter how it is evaluated, it cannot be ignored. That is why even if one takes a skeptical view of the constructive potential of this category, studying its meaning and the scope of its application in the context of a substantive analysis of the essence of the problem, the conceptual tradition, in the framework of this tradition will undoubtedly yield positive results. Essentially, the problem lies not in providing a formal definition of the term "activity" in accordance with someone's personal preferences, but in a substantive analysis of the inherent specificity and uniqueness of man's relation to the world, of the way man adjusts to it.

Considering what has been stated above, I cannot agree with A.L. Nikiforov's view that the discussion about the place and importance of the concept of activity in "historical materialism" is a typical example of a scholastic pseudo-problem. Incidentally, why only "in historical materialism"? The category of activity, just like the category of practice, which is very close to it, is probably the category central to the Marxist-Leninist philosophy as a whole. However in this context this is beside the point. The main question is whether or not to consider the primacy of the category of activity as the fundamental feature of human relation to the world and a substantive problem. This depends on the understanding of the problem itself.

A.L. Nikiforov himself recognizes — and we of course have to agree with him on this — that the question of the primary character of the category of activity is rational if the category makes it possible to solve a certain specific problem. For me and, I believe, for the overwhelming majority of the participants in this discussion, the specific problem is

what meaning should be ascribed to the category of activity if this category is to be a basic feature of human relations to the world. Nikiforov is not interested in this problem, at least not in connection with the analysis of the category of activity. In fact, he uses the term "activity" to designate one of the types of human actions in a classification of these actions, which he postulates. How good this classification is and how justified it is by the existing tradition — and not only in philosophy, but in psychology and sociology as well — is a matter for a special discussion which must be based on an analysis of relevant substantive problems as they are studied primarily in sociology and psychology. In my opinion, Nikiforov totally overlooks this tradition. But, to repeat, this is a matter for special discussion. I have made some comments on this score in my previous text. A more thorough critical analysis would require a more specific treatment of this issue. In particular, I would have to consider the validity of Weber's classification of the modes of actions, of which, to some extent, Nikiforov's approach is reminiscent, and address some other points.

I will highlight once again some of the initial methodological assumptions in my analysis of the category of activity. For me, the category of activity is not a classification concept with a certain empirical reference in the form of actually observable human actions that are distinguished from human actions of a different kind again by outwardly observable empirical features, as, for example, rationally controlled actions are distinct from affective ones. In my view, the category of activity emerges as a certain theoretical construct, to use a familiar term from the methodology of science. It must primarily characterize possible human relations with the world. This construct can serve as a way to understand real situations, actions by social groups or individual subjects only in the context of relevant philosophical, sociological and psychological theories which have yet to be developed. And it is not that I, for instance, am interested in abstract theoretical problems and not in analyzing real human actions. It is just that, in order to be able to understand and rationalize these actions and deeds, in particular to somehow classify them and develop their typology, a theory and theoretical concepts for such a rationalization and typology are needed.

Concepts incorporated into a theory are not generated by some malevolent desire to engage in abstract scholastic theorizing, and not even by the intention to realize the explicit guidelines of "essentialism" as a certain ideology of scientific and cognitive activity, even though this consideration also has a role to play. The need to make the transition from the empirical and classification level of cognition to the theoretical level is determined by the practical need for the investigation and is a constructive way out of the quagmire of chaotic diversity in which empirical-classificational approach eventually gets bogged down. The need for this transition can easily be seen in the material from the history of natural sciences. This regularity also comes into play in the develop-

ment of social sciences and the humanities, in sociology and psychology. Eventually, a theory proves to be a *sine qua non* for a rational logical understanding of the empirical world. On the other hand, it is well-known that theoretical cognition follows its own special logic, has its own "specific" problems. In principle, the admittedly appropriate appeal to combat abstract scholastic theorizing in this field, can do nothing but harm, when it turns into a battle cry.

I believe that Nikiforov's dislike for so-called abstract scholastic theorizing in understanding activity is inherently linked to his position on the nature of philosophical thinking itself. Of course, this is again a special question that lies outside the scope of the topic that we are discussing. However, a certain position regarding this issue is a necessary initial assumption for an analysis of the concept of activity. Nikiforov insists that philosophy is not a science, that philosophy is scientific only in so far as it must rely on scientific data. As I see it, philosophy is of course different from science since the latter has developed in the framework of the classical mathematics-based paradigm of natural sciences. The history of philosophy and the history of mathematics-based natural sciences, in my opinion, prove this convincingly. Moreover, in my view, an analysis of the nature of the concept of activity as a special form of man's existence in the world can shed light on the special nature of philosophical concepts that reflect a special kind of objectivity, an objectivity of "open," incomplete being, different from the objectivity of classical natural sciences. This is a question of utmost topical interest, yet it is also a fairly complicated one and,again, calls for a special analysis. That is why, in my opinion, it is of course necessary to speak out against primitive scientism in interpreting philosophical thinking. At the same time, I believe that philosophy, given all the specificity of its subject-matter, still remains a form of rational reflexive consciousness. It can be demonstrated that to some extent this applies to so-called irrational and anti-intellectual trends in philosophy. When scholars working within these trends definitively break with rational reflexive thinking, those who are most consistent and philosophically mature at the same time become aware of the need to break with philosophy, as Heidegger eventually did.

A distinguishing feature of philosophical rationality, not in the terms of scientism, but in the broad sense of the word, is a predisposition to objectivity and its rational reflection, as opposed to any kind of outism that manifests itself in the desire to project one's limited (personal or group) position as a philosophical outlook. It is true that philosophy cannot and should not attempt to rid itself of the subjective view it expresses (and not of subjectivity!). There is no question where the formula "like man, like his philosophy" doesn't make sense. However, this does not mean that it is the function of philosophical consciousness just to express a certain subjective position. The meaning of philosophy as a rational reflexive form of world outlook and its cultural value lie in that

this subjective position must be confirmed through rational theoretical means. Without that, if all we have is a projection on the world of the relation to it of certain sectors or groups of society or even of concrete individuals, what we have is an ideology and not a philosophical outlook per se. Otherwise, we should clearly and explicitly abandon any attempt to elaborate such an outlook.

The answer to the question about the nature of the concept of activity depends on how we understand philosophical consciousness. The point of course is not that different authors can interpret the term "activity" differently. The important thing is that in any interpretation we must not be guided by personal tastes or preferences. Rather we should consider to what extent a given theoretical solution helps advance the understanding of objectivity, what real substantive tasks the proposed concept of activity will help solve.

The category of activity is a theoretical construct, albeit a highly special one. Even though my view once again may not be to V.N. Sagatovsky's liking, I still believe that activity is a sort of a "block," an element in an activity-based picture of the world, which must form the basis of different theories (or to put it more precisely, approaches) that would reveal the concrete nature of human existence. In my view, the activity approach, or the activity-based picture of the world, exists as independent cognitive structures not because we speak in prose and are not aware of it, or because to date they have not yet been subjected to a methodological reflection. Even when they are, they do not lose their characteristic as a special independent strata of theoretical knowledge. When, for example, we reflect upon the mechanical picture of the world, we do not thereby turn this picture into a theory of mechanics. The mechanistic picture of the world, regardless of whether it has been reflected upon or has emerged as an unconscious system of preconditions, has served as a basis for different physical theories, and not only mechanistic ones either. A mechanistic picture of the world is a certain image of physical reality, physical objectivity. It cannot and should not be turned into a physical theory. At the same time, this is not to say that under certain circumstances it cannot be formulated as an explicit theory. Similarly, the activity approach, or the activity-based picture of the world, represents a certain image of human existence which must serve as a precondition for developing an ideal system of mutually interconnected sociological, culturological, psychological, etc., theories that would have the activity approach as their basis.

Therefore, the status of the category of activity in the structure of our knowledge about man and his relation to the world poses a serious theoretical problem and it is only natural that the texts submitted for this publication focus on this issue. The main possible positions have already been stated rather clearly and the discussion in its general form to a certain extent has already begun "to go round in circles" (cf. for example, the controversy between V.V. Davydov and G.S. Batyshchev). In

order to move forward constructively, we probably need more specific studies on the basis of the fundamental positions that have already been formulated. I would only note that it seems to me that those who favor the inclusion of creativity and goal-setting into activity, as well as those who are opposed to the separation of activity and communication are still not emphatic enough in stressing that no matter how much importance is attributed to the fact that the subjects in their self-improvement and self-development interact, this, ultimately, is always the deed of the subject himself; his "openness" in the course of self-development is not restricted by his readiness "to take into account" the possibility of a more full and in-depth programing, being necessarily the realization of this possibility.

Chapter 21

SOME REMARKS ON CRITICAL REMARKS

By V.Z. Kelle

The first thought that comes to mind when one reads the critical remarks in this publication is that people who launched this project have found a very good format for it. Indeed, critical remarks on the initial texts are very useful if only in that they clarify the positions of those who are criticized and the critics. Moreover, in accordance with "the spiral law," the discussion deepens as it reaches a new level. It is becoming quite evident that discussions about activity can produce positive results only if this concept is not considered on its own, since it is highly polysemantic, but within the framework of a certain conceptual system. In this case the validity of a given interpretation of the category "activity" becomes dependent on the adequacy of the system itself and on the place of this category within it.

The question that interested me most from the very start was the place of the category of activity in the conceptual system underlying the materialistic understanding of history, since different interpretations of this issue have appeared. This question is of fundamental importance because it involves consistent application of materialism in history. At this point, with the discussion at the concluding phase, I would not want to go beyond this framework, even though there is a mixed reaction to my view of activity as a generic concept in relation to a specific type of man's activity in society. For example, N.S. Zlobin believes that it is broad, while V.N. Sagatovsky, who on the whole is in agreement with it, blames me for turning the unit of activity and social relations into an absolute, a point which I emphasize specifically since activity outside social relations loses social meaning and does not make any sense whatsoever. Taking into account the diversity of criticism, I believe I have every reason to stand my ground on this issue.

And so, the place of activity in historical materialism. Two authors expressed open disagreement with my critical analysis of the view which regards activity as the initial category of historical materialism. V.V. Davydov, for example, did not even trouble himself with any arguments, simply declaring my approach unconvincing. V.N. Sagatovsky, for his part, indicated that he disagreed because, in his opinion, I viewed as

an absolute not only the unity of activity and social relations, but also the genetically derivative nature of activity. What can I say in this connection? Davydov shares Y.K. Pletnikov's position that activity is the initial category in the process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. However, I have already stated on a previous occasion that activity is a very complex category rich in content and that it should be regarded as the end result, rather than as a point of departure in the ascension from the abstract to the concrete. In order to turn it into the initial category of this process, it should be transformed, and transformed artificially, into an abstraction, which has in fact been done. However, in this case, as Sagatovsky is correct in pointing out, activity loses its special features altogether and emerges only as "the otherness" of an impersonal process. In other words, having activity as the initial principle of historical materialism goes against its very nature. Furthermore, I could reproach both authors for not paying attention to my own arguments when they analyze and evaluate my position. Although Davydov believes that this is not his business, he has not convinced me — I can admit that I am wrong only if my arguments have been refuted. Without that, any appraisals or qualifications are of no consequence.

Moreover, both theoretical considerations and everyday practice force me to stand up in defence my position. If we bring activity down from the soaring heights to the sinful earth where our society has been developing over the past decades, we cannot help noticing that outmoded socio-economic mechanisms have been suppressing creative initiative and activeness, while at the same time leaving the door open and sometimes even creating vast opportunities for the "highrollers" of the shadow economy, bureaucrats, embezzlers, and wasteful and incompetent people. No number of the most beautiful words about activity can help in any way if we do not change these mechanisms and thereby create such conditions as would stimulate people and channel their activity in the interests of socialism. That is why if we speak about the methodology of historical materialism, then discussing activity in general, just as man, society, etc. in general, within its conceptual framework outside the context of specific social relations, conditions, socio-economic mechanisms is simply inadvisable because we thereby lose the most important feature of activity — its historical concreteness.

I focus on a feature of activity which in no way negates its other characteristics. Thus, the objectivity of activity presupposes that it is historically concrete. The same can be said about such a feature of activity as its ability to go beyond the framework of the existing conditions and overcome all the defined programs of activity. Historical concreteness of activity remains regardless of whether we speak about the determination of activity by specific conditions or about their transformation. The recognition of the creative revolutionary and transforming nature of social practice and human activity in no way cancels out the principle of social determinism, the unity of social relations and ac-

tivity. As for "viewing as an absolute the genetically derivative nature of activity," I believe that this critical remark results from a somewhat one-sided reading of my text. The fact is that I fully agree with the way Sagatovsky rejects this "absolute view," but where did I resort to it? My concern was to justify a materialistic approach to activity, to prove that it was not possible to replace the principle of materialism with the principle of activity, and that activity itself must be interpreted in materialistic terms. What has "viewing the genetically derivative nature of activity as an absolute" got to do with it?! When I was asserting the materialistic approach, did I deny the dialectics of the interaction between activity and the objective conditions of being? Does recognizing the dependence of activity on objective conditions in historical materialism automatically negate its independent "contribution" to the historical process? It is known that when we analyze interaction, we must always reveal its underlying basis and not stop at interaction itself. This is elementary. Let us translate Sagatovsky's critical remarks addressed to me on this issue into the concrete language of today's problems. We would get something like this: Kelle views the need for perestroika as an absolute and underestimates, disregards, etc., its influence (perestroika is activity) on the subsequent development of our society. It is obvious that this accusation is simply preposterous, that under this approach "activity-related specificity" is in no way forced into the background. At the same time, I am in agreement with Sagatovsky when he speaks out against turning activity and "the activity approach" into absolutes.

The question of the place of the category of activity in historical materialism is also touched upon in I.T. Kasavin's text. In an attempt to somehow narrow the differences, he asserts that each approach is justified in its own right, but that the way the question is formulated, i.e., what the point of departure should be — activity or the theory of formations — is one-sided. In his view, historical materialism should be developed on the basis of specific research goals, objective scientific needs, etc., and that a research strategy should be selected accordingly.

I believe that if individual problems and even lines of research are meant here, then Kasavin is absolutely correct and we can agree with him. Indeed problems that can be solved in terms of the activity approach do exist. As is known, activity is also an explanatory principle, but not always because every methodological approach has its scope of application which it must not exceed. For example, can it be explained on the basis of activity why capitalism replaces feudalism or why under the present circumstances a non-capitalist way of development has become possible? It is clear that the activity principle is helpless here even though these processes cannot unfold outside activity, class struggle, without the manifestation of diverse forms of human activeness. On the other hand, activity does emerge as a central category in the analysis of culture and creativity.

However, I think this argument does not apply when the basis of the materialistic understanding of history is at issue. History is people's activity. The task is to elaborate scientific principles for the analysis of activity. In elaborating the methodology for this analysis we should proceed not from activity itself, but from objective laws that determine it, from the objective basis of this activity — only in this way can we extend materialism to the understanding of social phenomena. Here we need monism and not "polyphony." In this context, the meaning and importance of dialectics lies in that it makes it possible to ensure consistent application of materialism. Without dialectics it is impossible to be consistent in applying materialism to the sphere of social life because here we come up against such contradictions and oppositions that we cannot do without dialectical thinking. Dialectics itself acquires the force and status of a scientific methodology only on the basis of materialism. Similarly, the activity approach, as distinct from any manifestations and forms of subjective activism, pragmatism, voluntarism, etc., acquires a scientific status in understanding history because it exists and functions on the basis and in the framework of historical materialism.

Chapter 22

TO ARGUE IS TO SEEK THE TRUTH

By Y.K. Pletnikov

The discussion about activity as a philosophical principle and philosophical category has touched upon problems central to philosophical knowledge. I shall address only some of them in my remarks.

First of all about the correlation between philosophy and science. The comments by the participants in the discussion demonstrate great diversity, ranging from the assertion that philosophy, including Marxist philosophy, is not a science (A.L. Nikiforov) to the recognition that philosophy as a phenomenon of culture is larger than science (V.N. Sagatovsky). With regard to this question, my position has not changed — I am still of the view that, unlike pre-Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy, Marxist philosophy is a special science, i.e. a theoretical basis for a scientific view of the world.

I have already presented some arguments in this regard in my previous text . At this point I would like to make the following comment. I believe that what makes philosophical knowledge scientific and defines philosophy as a world outlook-science are the most general laws of the development of nature, society and thinking that it discovers. This constitutes the objective basis for the unity (identity) of dialectics, logic and the theory of cognition, makes it possible to determine scientifically the object of philosophy and to elaborate a scientific philosophical system. Of course, the model for acquiring knowledge characteristic of physics and mathematics and so typical for natural sciences as a whole is not applicable to philosophy. At the same time, we cannot focus exclusively on the knowledge derived from social sciences and the humanities. The subject matter of philosophy has always been and remains the complex contradictory system "world — man" and, consequently, man's relation to reality. However, the most general laws that make the very relation possible, i.e. the laws of materialistic dialectics, existed before man and human society. Therefore, they constitute the theoretical and methodological basis for the knowledge of social sciences and the humanities.

Philosophy, and not only philosophy but all social sciences necessarily has value judgements as a part of its content. This is understandable because these sciences deal with man and his relation to reality. If the

presence of value judgements in Marxist philosophy is used as a basis for questioning its scientific validity, then the scientific status of all social sciences should probably also be called in question to a certain degree. This idea is not entirely new, yet it still preoccupies some philosophers.

Value judgements constitute the inner potential of philosophy and all social sciences, which turns their intellectual material into ideological attitudes. Marxist philosophy is not only a science, it is the theoretical basis for a scientific view of the world. It is also a scientific ideology. A world outlook is always related to ideology, while not being identical to it. Unlike a world outlook, ideology primarily deals with a logical system of views that relate exclusively to social life; secondly, its function in the life of society is to set goals for practical activity; thirdly, ideology formulates and gives direct expression to social interests; therefore, it necessarily belongs to the masses, at least in a class society it belongs to its classes and other social groups.

In the debate about whether or not Marxist philosophy is a science, we do not need groundless assertions, denials or postulates, but logical proofs. Within the system of these proofs, the general characteristic of Marxism, a constituent element of which is Marxist philosophy, should not be ignored. Vladimir Lenin pointed out that "the Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true."[1] He wrote, "We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists must develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life."[2] Therefore, according to Lenin's definition, Marxism is a science. But is it possible to exclude from this science its constituent element — the philosophy of Marxism? I think the answer is "no." To recognize Marxism as a science is also to recognize all of its constituent parts as a science.

Human activity is the only possible mode of existence and development of social (historical) reality. This conclusion is by no means called in question by such social phenomena as communication, behavior or creativity. They are not alternatives to creativity; they make it more specific and rich in new qualities and features. All these ideas have been formulated and justified rather well in current literature on historical materialism.[3] Summing up the essence of the problem, let us only stress the following point.

K. Marx and F. Engels used the concept of communication in their early writing to designate both social (above all, material) and personal relations, while in later works they applied it only to personal relations. Moreover, every reference was not just to personal relations, but to their actual realization, in the course of which personal relations emerge both as the individual form of social relations and as a complement of them. However, the sphere of social relations, i.e., the social form of people's activity, is not all. At the level of the socium, communication constitutes an essential component and content of human activity, of all its forms

and types. Social individuals influence one another and interact in activity, they reveal and establish shared feelings and views, transmit information, consolidate, and manifest solidarity, without which group and, above all, class activity is impossible. On the other hand, at the level of the individual, communication itself is a type of activity. Such is the correlation between activity and communication.

As for behavior, this concept is more polysemantic than the concept of activity. It is used, for example, to designate subsequent changes in any dynamic system, the reaction of an organism to internal and external stimuli (a distinction is made between unconscious, instinctive, and deliberate, conscious behavior with the latter described as activity), the external (i.e., manifested outwardly) aspect of the activity of biological and social systems, etc. As applied to social reality, the concept of behavior is used in literature on social sciences to designate the value (axiological) aspect of human activity, especially in texts dealing with personality problems. If the unit of activity is an action, then the unit of behavior is an act. It is clear that in accordance with this understanding of behavior, it is impossible as a matter of principle to oppose behavior to activity.

Finally, a few words about creativity. In any of its meanings, creativity is activity. In the narrow sense of the word, it implies getting a result that has a certain degree of novelty, creating something that has never been before. Creative activity in this case is opposed to reproductive activity, i.e. activity that repeats what already exists. There is also another, a broader interpretation of creativity. Creative activity is understood as creating; it includes reproduction and is opposed to destructive (disruptive) activity. Karl Marx, relying on this understanding, defined any labor, and not only universal labor, as positive creative activity.[4]

My interpretation of the concept of activity, which I set forth in my texts, applied to the theory of historical materialism, has provoked objections to some fundamental points on the part of V.Z. Kelle. Let us take a look at these objections on their merit, because in the search for truth, no one can claim exclusive rights and a participant in a theoretical debate should not be taken at his word; his positions must be proven.

The toughest challenge in elaborating any scientific theory is its beginning. The simplest definitions of science do not appear by chance. They designate the elementary constituent element of the subject matter of the research, i.e. its "cell." However, these definitions only appear simple and are not easy to formulate. There is no question that it is harder to understand the "cell" of the subject matter of scientific research, precisely because it is so elementary, than to study more developed and complex forms. Turning to the history of peoples, to all the successive socio-economic formations as stages in the development of human society, I am firmly of the opinion that such a "cell" of social life, unique in its kind, is the objectified result of people's activity, more precisely, the product of human labor.

The product of human labor is the ultimate indivisible structure of the social system. Let us take, for example, people's actual activity in life, the unit of which is an action. Here we have the subject and the object of activity, needs, interests, goals, means, etc., in other words, an action is not a simple unit, but, on the contrary, is a complex one. On the other hand, an elementary structure of social life emerges only when the process of labor ". . .constantly undergoes a transformation: from being motion, it becomes an object without motion . . .".[5] All features of the process of labor are brought together in its product in a single indivisible objective structure of the social system. This is exactly how the "cell" of social life is formed and this is the only way to form it.

V.Z. Kelle poses a legitimate question: how correct is this operation? If, as we analyze labor and its product, we abstract ourselves from the historical form of commodity production, then what is left as a remainder? A direct question deserves a direct answer. I believe that so far researchers have been focusing on the commodity form of the result of people's activity, which is historically transient, and have not been paying enough attention to an element which has concrete universal and general significance for all stages of human history, i.e. the social nature of objectified activity itself which does not have to be a commodity.

My distinguished opponent believes that an abstraction from the commodity form of the product "results in an abstraction from the social characteristics of labor and its product in general." But what then can we make of the fact that labor and its product actually become social in nature? Is it possible that in the long run the law of the economy of labor will not make any sense? The answer is a categorical "no." The reference here is not only to the future, but also to the past. When Marx discussed world history, among other things, he wrote, "In all states of society, the labor-time that it costs to produce the means of subsistence, must necessarily be an object of interest to mankind, though not of equal interest in different stages of development."[6] He never identified the social nature of the product of labor with value-based definitions of commodity production. Clarifying his position, Marx explained that, ". . .'the value' of a commodity only expresses in a historically developed form what already exists, albeit in a different form, in all other historical social forms, i.e., the social nature of labor, since the latter exists as the expenditure of social labor force."[7]

Regardless of its social form, labor always emerges as useful labor, creating a use-value. As man separates the products of his labor from himself (which results from the distribution of labor between individuals) and thereby becomes useful to other people, he correlates himself with them, as it were. People may know nothing about one another, yet thanks to the products of labor, they become united in a single whole, and their lives become the lives of social individuals. However, in the final analysis it is not the result of labor, taken in its

natural form, that is the objective equivalent of this exchange of activity and abilities and, consequently, that generates production relations (even though in pre-capitalist formations it was given priority). It is socially necessary impersonal labor, embodied in such results, that corresponds to a certain historical phase in the development of society. To emphasize Marx's idea once again, the expenditure (time) of labor has always interested people to a certain degree. When a product of labor embodies and crystallizes the social substance, it necessarily acquires social characteristics, regardless of the social form (i.e., in any society). If we regard concrete and abstract labor as particular, related only to commodity production, then it is quite logical to interpret useful and socially necessary labor as universal. I believe that this analysis lays the most profound theoretical basis for the science of political economy in the broadest sense.

The texts in this book describe rather well the role of universal labor, its connection with free time and its uniqueness; they also convincingly demonstrate that, as a result, the wealth it creates cannot be measured in terms of labor time. Does this mean, however, that in the long run mankind will be able to discontinue quantity production of ordinary goods and stop satisfying man's everyday demand for material means of subsistence? Probably not. Regardless of the degree of automation, technology will always need the work of technologists, programers, adjusters, operators and others. And although they will work alongside the production process, their work will still be measured in terms of labor time, i.e., it will carry the stamp of socially necessary labor. It is well know that Marx said that "the reign of freedom" can flourish only on the basis of the "reign of need" which expands because man's needs grow. In this sense, "the regulation of labor-time and the distribution of social labor among the various production groups, ultimately the book-keeping encompassing all this, become more essential than ever."[8]

I understand the feeling with which V.Z. Kelle speaks about social relations, revealing the mystery of their origin and their essence. Unfortunately, with him the mystery of the origin of social relations remained a mystery, even though an interpretation of this problem is given with regard to the pre-capitalist social forms. The following words sum up the essence of this interpretation: "Thus, social characteristics here are determined by people's relations to the conditions of their production and each other, i.e. by the forms of property. People cannot produce without joining one another, without entering into certain relations with one another. If we abstract ourselves from this consideration, it is impossible to understand how social relations form in the process of labor."

What can be said in this regard? First of all, that the relations of property as economic relations are essentially production relations taken in their integrity.[9] Thus, there is a vicious circle in the author's reasoning — production relations form social relations and, consequently, production relations. Naturally, such an approach does not lift the cloak

of mystery from the origin of social relations. In my works I have already had occasion to express my opinion as to where the source of social relations should be sought, what role in this process is played by the social nature of the products of labor, the socially necessary impersonal labor embodied in products or, in other words, by the social substance. There is no need to return to this topic. As for the criticism of my approach, as the reader can well see, it does not appear to be very convincing. To argue is to seek the truth. The discussion continues, so let us go where it may take us.

1. V.I. Lenin. Collected Works. 4th ed., Vol. 19, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishers, p. 23
2. Ibid. Vol. 4, p. 211-212.
3. See: Marxist-Leninist Theory of the Historical Process. The Historical Process: Reality, Material Basis, the Primary and the Secondary. p. 84-86, 110-119. (In Russian)
4. Marx K. Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Okonomie. Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1953, p. 507.
5. Marx K., Engels F., Collected Works. Vol. 1, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1978, p. 184.
6. Ibid., p. 76.
7. Marx K., Engels F. Werke. Band 19, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1962, p. 375.
8. Marx K. Capital. Vol. III, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1978, p. 851.
9. Marx K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 20, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1985, p. 28.

Chapter 23

YES, WE NEED A MONISTIC THEORY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

By V.V. Davydov

The materials in the two sections of this collection of articles make it possible to draw three conclusions. Firstly, many authors are of the opinion that the category of activity must be used to develop a theory of human existence as its single initial basis which will ensure appropriate monism for the theory. It is true though that many difficulties crop up in elaborating such a theory and it is necessary to use new factual data and to clarify the initial content of this category to eliminate them. Secondly, some authors believe that the category of activity cannot serve as a single basis for the theory of human existence and that it should be complemented by "communication," "subject" and "interaction" which would have the same status. These proposals are either explicitly against the elaboration of this theory on a monistic basis or contain some doubts regarding its advisability. Thirdly, in the texts by a number of authors it is hard to discern a sufficiently clear position on the topic under study (this is primarily because they address other important problems).

Why do I see the monism of the theory of human existence as so inseparably connected with the essence of the entire set of problems related to activity? Today few scholars deny that the category of activity has some significance for the elaboration of theories that relate to man. However, for materialistic dialectics an intellectual construct is a "theory" only when the thought in the course of elaborating it ascends from the abstract to the concrete, with the "abstract" understood as the initial basis or the "cell" of the process in developing a certain integral system.[1]

However, this signifies that a true theory of human existence based on the category of activity and the monistic method used to elaborate it are inseparable from each other.

> Monism is. . . a logical view which holds that it is possible to develop any whole theoretical construct consistently on the basis of only one initial basic assumption. . . which runs through the entire line of scientific argument, and, consequently, is the conviction that underlying every logically streamlined and systematically developed scientific theory is only one

> fundamental principle from which all other theoretical provisions of this theory are deduced.[2]

And further: "From the point of view of the monistic requirement in dialectical logic, the initial concept in every scientific theory must reflect the special nature. . .of the group of phenomena under study so that when a system of theoretical definitions is subsequently elaborated it would adequately reflect the basic regularity underlying the development of this specific nature into a given diversity of phenomena."[3]

In this context V.N. Sagatovsky's remark that I am trying to ensure theoretical "monism at any price" does not make any sense since a monistic theory of human existence based on the category of activity can be developed only in accordance with the "all-or-nothing" principle. Furthermore, to obtain such a theory, no effort should be spared and any price should be paid (but many of us do not have the strength to do that).

V.N. Sagatovsky himself believes that monism is not enough when we move from organic systems to harmonious or polyphonic systemic unities which allegedly do not have "a single center" (he has borrowed this characterization of these unities from G.S. Batyshchev). The assertion that there is some systemic unity without a "single center" (or a single basis) is a peculiar logical novelty, which so far, is in fact only a declaration. It is also declared that a polyphonic systemic unity and an organic system are fundamentally different (let me note that a theory of such a system can be successfully constructed on the basis of dialectical logic inseparable from monism). Why do people who come up with these novel ideas believe that polyphonic systemic unities cannot be analyzed on the basis of monistic dialectical logic? This belief is justified either when the intrinsic connection between monism and dialectical logic is denied or its universal nature is not recognized. However, to prove these implications incontestably, if, of course, it is at all possible, the innovators would need to accomplish a feat of logic of which, in our opinion, they are simply incapable.

Using the attractive word "polyphony," these authors can only rely on the eclectic approach, which has been known in logic for a long time, in devising a theory. This approach reflects a desire on the part of certain theorists to connect the cold and bare initial abstraction with a systemic whole, rich in and vibrant with concrete content, bypassing complex mediations. An example of this is the desire to establish a direct link between "activity" and "deep-level communication." But since there is no short cut to do so and elaborating mediations is rather difficult, these theorists are rather inclined to use the concept of "systemic unity," thereby refusing to develop a true theory and moreover decrying the "insufficiency" of monism.

Furthermore, V.N. Sagatovsky is not happy that some authors "reduce" activity to man's transformation of objective reality. From his

point of view, this "reduction" is inadmissible since it leads to a certain "reductionism." However, it is well known that in dialectical logic the "reduction" is one way to obtain generalized and essential features; at the same time, it is also a simple basis of complex objects, a definition of their "cell." This reduction has nothing to do with so-called reductionism. A reduction characteristic of a theory elaborated on a monistic basis leads to a substantive initial abstraction which is specific for the entire concrete content deduced on its basis.

Why then is Sagatovsky (incidentally, like some other authors) afraid of this reduction of activity to the transformation of the object and believes that this leads to a simplified understanding of it? According to Marxist-Leninist theory, changing and transforming objective reality is the most essential characteristic of man's activity[4] and especially of labor as its historically initial type. When Karl Marx in Capital describes the general special features of human labor, he characterizes it above all as man's activity aimed at changing nature and says that in the process man uses the properties of certain natural things as tools to affect other things and turns them thereby into an organ of his activity. By acting on nature and changing it, man at the same time changes himself.[5]

This succinct characterization of labor activity by Marx contains the initial abstraction or the "cell" of the theory of human existence which can be developed by making this abstraction more specific monistically, by ascending from the abstract to the concrete. This abstraction is as much one-sided as any abstraction is, yet at the same time this substantive abstraction constitutes an undeveloped beginning of the developed whole, i.e., the many-sided human existence, the source from which its entire specific rich content is deduced.

All abstract talk about the creative elements of human existence can be placed in a real constructive context if we address the specific and special feature of man's activity, i.e., changing and transforming nature and social reality, since in the final analysis, creativity is the transformation of the existent being and the creation of new forms of reality. Let us recall that Marx called man's material labor that transforms nature and produces tools creative activity.[6]

Attempts to connect creativity with communication ignoring the transforming and creative role of activity produce descriptions of various kinds of "bead games" which may look very attractive but are devoid of any true creative content.[7]

Sagatovsky emphasizes that not only the subject-object transformation, but also the subject-subject relation are present in activity. Admittedly, this is a correct statement but it is one that has long been recognized by specialists since, as is known, Marx already wrote that people's productive (or labor) activity exists only in the framework of social ties and relations. When I pointed out this important feature of activity in my first text in this publication, I stated at the same time that

as a process these relations manifest themselves in people's communication (primarily material communication) which thereby gives human activity its form, i.e., defines a certain framework for it.

Sagatovsky, who reproduces my point and complements it with another one that relates to the genesis of individual activity from collective and joint activity, draws the following unexpected conclusion regarding my theoretical position: "Indeed a position worthy of a businessman: create appropriate conditions for labor, and all the rest will follow, or more specifically, will be stamped from the matrix of actions on the individual's tabula rasa. How can we speak about the culture of communication, about understanding, one's inner life, the self-value of spirituality — all this "lyricism" proves to be groundless. . ."

Indeed, by joining together the two abstract observations set forth above (I find them quite valid and if the occasion presents itself I can justify them in detail), no man with a theoretical mind can engage in any substantive consideration of "understanding," "the self-value of spirituality" — for the time being I am prepared to give up all this "lyricism" in favor of Sagatovsky who is eager to have "his own inner life." Of course, I do not deny the reality of all this "lyricism" but, recognizing the monistic principle of ascension, I believe that it should be theoretically deduced from people's collective joint and generic activity through a complex chain of mediations. The complex process of the interiorization of this activity generates special individuals with their own inner life. In this context, it is necessary to rely on Marx's important idea that "man's individual and species-life are not different," and that "the mode of existence of the individual is a more particular or a more general mode of the life of the species."[8]

For psychology, individual life reveals the life of the human species only in the process of interiorization. At present this process has been studied in psychology rather well. Moreover, in the 1930s L.S. Vygotsky already had factual evidence to formulate the following general genetic law of the child's mental development, the law of the interiorization of the joint or actually collective activity: ". . .every function in the cultural development of the child comes onstage twice. . . at first among people and then inside the child. Genetically underlying all higher functions, their relations are social relations, real relations of people."[9] And further, "functions first form in a collective as children's relations and then turn into mental functions of the personality."[10]

However, Sagatovsky probably had no time to study L.S. Vygotsky's works and even less so the writing of his students and followers; otherwise he of course would not have formed such a superficial view of interiorization as a mechanical process of "stamping" the matrices of joint actions on an individual. (This fact shows that some theorists should read modern experimental works by psychologists.)

Underlying my "position of a businessman" in the theoretical search for the "real conditions" of human labor is the provision that they cor-

respond to the conditions under which developed forms of labor are realized and that this labor will be creative in all spheres of its application and will serve as a basis for the true spirituality of a new man. People create these conditions in the course of a complex socio-historical struggle which in fact shapes this man but does not "stamp" him because, being its subject, he participates in creating them.

And another point. For many years, my colleagues and I studied experimentally the conditions that stimulate high school students to activity which develops their theoretical awareness and thinking. These practical considerations sharpened my interest in general problems of activity and when I extended them to the entire sphere of man's mental development lead me to study the theory of social being and questions of shaping it. This theory (especially a monistic one) is absolutely necessary to a psychologist studying various age groups when he considers further experimental ways to study how man's activity, consciousness and personality form and develop.

Let us consider some of the views expressed by A.V. Brushlinsky in his second text. He believes that the initial and most fundamental basis of human existence is people's interaction with the world (activity is the principal but not the only way for its realization). Man's entire development occurs as external and internal conditions and preconditions interact. The interaction that generates the individual's mind begins prior to the emergence of activity. This general provision makes it possible for Brushlinsky to formulate the hypothesis that an unborn child can develop the most elementary mental phenomena under the influence of external stimuli on the basis of his natural predispositions (i.e., as the external and internal preconditions of the primary mind, which emerges before activity, interact).

First of all, Brushlinsky does not provide a substantive description of interaction. Some of his remarks suggest that he understands interaction as, for example, "inseparable ties" with the world. However, such ties, as, indeed, the interaction of internal and external conditions (under any interpretation of interaction) can exist prior to and outside activity since man's real life has many aspects (cf., for example, its physiological manifestations). Moreover, some of these ties (or interactions) can be the preconditions for man's activity (and only preconditions) and they can be quite numerous. The important thing is, however, to define such interaction (or ties) as a specific basis of man's activity and consciousness. I have not found a description of this special feature in the text under consideration.

Secondly, in order to be able to judge whether mental phenomena are present in an unborn enfant, it is necessary to provide a detailed description of the parameters of the "mental;" without that, these phenomena can be attributed to any other sphere. As far as I can tell, Brushlinsky has yet to supply an appropriate justification of relevant features in his works.

Thirdly, when we speak about the fundamental and specific basis of man's social existence, its definition does not necessarily have to be correlated with a specific human need, mental goals or images it generates, the social forms of its realization. I believe that in itself the insufficiently clear view of interaction, proposed by Brushlinsky, does not make it possible to move to a theoretical understanding of these essential mental structures of man. At the same time, a theoretical analysis of the meaning of the category of activity (of course the meaning defined by relevant factual material) can demonstrate that these structures are necessary for its actual realization by the social man. The category of activity is commensurate to these mental structures and can be considered as their specific basis. The concept of interaction in this case can emerge only as their important but non-specific precondition. That it why it cannot be considered a more fundamental basis of human existence than activity.

Brushlinsky groups me with those who believe that the mental aspect emerges as the result of the interiorization of people's joint (or external) activity. (Consequently, it does not contain mental components in itself.) In reality, I did not assert anything of the kind but this view can be found, for example, in A.Y. Leontiev's writing. First of all, my view of interiorization is connected only with the process where individual activity emerges on the basis of collective activity. However, every individual who participates in joint activity, of course, has a certain level of consciousness (probably different from the one needed for the realization of individual activity). Of course, questions that arise in connection with these two forms of activity are still far from being adequately solved. Similarly, the genetic connection between people's joint activity and the levels of consciousness of separate individuals who engage in it also poses a difficult problem. These questions require further exhaustive experiments and theoretical research (it is true, though, that at present interesting materials have been obtained in child psychology that help to understand in more concrete terms the nature of the genetic ties between the forms of activity in question).[11]

In conclusion, I would like to say the following. I share the views of those authors who, despite a certain terminological dissonance, clearly stress the fundamental and basic importance of the category of activity for the theory of human existence. This recognition makes it possible to come to grips with the task of implementing the monistic principle in constructing this theory (a number of authors consistently apply precisely this principle in their works). It should be pointed out once again that any category can be used as a basis for the monistic theory of human existence (for example, interaction, communication, creation). However, the necessary condition for this is that this category be presented as a "cell" of contradictions. By revealing its content, we can explain different specific levels of the integral human existence and the intellectual structures that realize it. I believe that the history of the

disciplines studying man has already singled out the category of activity as this "cell."

Of course, in elaborating an appropriate theory, one should take into account other approaches and listen to criticism concerning treating this category as a so-called "absolute." However, it should also be born in mind that modern individual disciplines studying man (for example, psychology) need an integral and streamlined theory which can be developed only on the basis of consistent monism.

1. See: Materialistic Dialectics. Moscow, 1985, pp. 253-256. (In Russian)
2. Philosophical Encyclopedia. Moscow, 1964, Vol. 3, p. 489. (In Russian)
3. Ibid. Vol. 3, p. 491.
4. "The activity of man . . . changes external actuality and thus . . . makes it as being in and for itself (objectively true)" (See: Lenin V.I. Collected Works. 4th ed. Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishers, Vol. 38, p. 218).
5. Marx K. Capital. Vol. 1, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1978, p. 173.
6. Marx K. Grudrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie. Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1953, p. 507.
7. As a result of research in psychology and the educational science, there is evidence to suggest that when in the second year of his life the child undertakes actions to transform the objective situation in order to obtain new impressions of it with the help of adults (i.e., in communication), he begins to develop play activity in the course of which primary elements of pre-vocal creative imagination emerge. (See: N.N. Palagina, L.V. Akhromeyeva. The Child at Early and Preschool Age. Frunze, 1983, pp. 5-25). (In Russian)
8. Marx K., Engels F. Collected Works. Vol. 3, International Publishers, New York, 1976, p. 299.
9. Vygotsky L.S. Collected Works. Vol. 3, Moscow, Pedagogika Publishers, 1983, p. 145. (In Russian)
10. Ibid., p. 146-147.
11. See: V.V. Rubtsov. Organizing and Promoting Children's Joint Actions in the Course of Education. Moscow, 1987. (In Russian)

Chapter 24

REPLY TO OBJECTIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

A.V. Brushlinsky

In the second section I.T. Kasavin misinterprets my approach when he concludes that I exclude subject-subject relations from activity. However, I specifically stressed that the subject of activity is humanity as a whole, representing the contradictory unity of subjects on a smaller scale, i.e., classes, groups, nations, and individuals who interact with each other. This explains the intrinsic sociality of any human individual, any community, group, of their activity, regardless of how social relations among them are specifically formed, and how each individual is specifically related to other people. It is well known that man's nature is the product of history (in the Lamarckian and not in the Marxist sense, of course). Man's sociality is the sociality of his interaction with the world. Not only subject-subject, but also subject-object relations are social. As early as the 1930s, when the methodological principle of the unity between consciousness and activity was first studied systematically, it was convincingly demonstrated that man's relation to a thing is always mediated by his relations to other people and, conversely, the interrelations among people are necessarily mediated by their relations to things.

Thus, any activity (and not only communication, behavior, contemplation, etc.) is characterized by subject-subject relations. This has been evident and for so long that this point hardly needs to be discussed. We probably have to address finer and more complex issues that relate to the specific types of interrelations between different yet always social levels and forms of man's interaction with the world, i.e., the interrelations between the subject's activity, communication, behavior, contemplation, mental activity, etc. In our opinion, one of the major problems here is that all these levels of man's interaction with the world are disjunctive, i.e., although not separated ontologically, they are different. In other words, in the course of development of any man, these levels become increasingly differentiated within one initial systemic unity, yet they never separate from each other and that is why it is so difficult to study the interrelation between them. Accordingly, in different systems of ties and relations, man's interaction with the world emerges in its different aspects such as activity, communication, behavior, etc. Here, for-

mal (disjunctive) logic is not enough and a more sophisticated dialectical (non-disjunctive) logic is needed. I tried to stress this point in my first text.

However, in Part 2, V.N. Sagatovsky interprets my position in the sense of formal mathematical logic. He blames me first of all for using in my text "conjunctions throughout: activity and communication, activity and consciousness." I can easily take care of this criticism by stating that when I consider these problems I do not use conjunctions or any other operations of mathematical logic because all of them are disjunctive and, therefore, inadequate here. A conjunction is also disjunctive (just as a disjunction is) because it unites elements that are initially separate. However, we have already seen that this initial separateness, disjunctivenss (in ontological and, therefore, in gnosiological aspects) is not peculiar to the subject, his mind, activity, etc. Therefore, the concept of the type "consciousness and activity" is not a conjunction.

Further on Sagatovsky notes that in my first text "the reduction of activity to labor or action is quite explicitly declared to be the essence of the activity approach." He asserts that on the basis of an action I want to explain "man's mental life and even human existence as a whole." This is obviously a misunderstanding! It can easily be seen that in my texts I view action only as one component of activity and consequently I do not reduce activity to it at all (this is also my answer to a similar criticism by N.S. Zlobin). However, paradoxical as it may seem, this is where the differences between my own view and Sagatovsky's are somewhat narrowed down. He refers to human existence in general in a positive sense and makes special mention of man's mental life. Therefore, in this integral context, both of us recognize the need for and the validity of analyzing mental life. For me, one way to proceed with this analysis is to penetrate deeper and deeper into mental activity, i.e., the activity of the brain which is inseparably connected with the entire initial practical activity of the subject.

However, Sagatovsky objects to the very concept and term "mental activity" (without any justification he compares it with volcanic activity which, in my opinion, is an obvious metaphor) and at the same time uses the concept of man's mental life in a positive sense. Let us not quibble over words; but, nevertheless, I am hopeful that his recognition of mental life will be the first step toward recognizing mental activity (in the above-mentioned sense).

Finally, Sagatovsky blames me for addressing too briefly the well-known scheme of dividing activity into its mutually connected components — goals, motives, etc. The fact is, however, that as early as the 1930s and 1940s this scheme was already elaborated in sufficient detail by S.L. Rubinshtein in his "Elements of Psychology" (1935) and "Elements of General Psychology" (1940 and 1946) as well as by A.N. Leontiev in his "Essay on the Development of the Mind" (1947). Subsequently, on repeated occasions, it was reproduced, clarified, discussed

and, in part, criticized[1], and that is why it does not make sense to subject it to a detailed analysis in our brief presentations.

Sagatovsky concludes his polemic with me by asserting that activity is a complex hierarchical system of actions and operations which cannot be reduced to individual actions or directly regulated by the goal alone. Here, once again, paradoxically, the differences in our positions are narrowed down because I also believe that activity cannot be regulated by the goal alone. In my first text I specifically emphasized that goals (always conscious) characterize the personal activity-related aspect of thinking, perception, etc. At the same time, a mental process that is largely unconscious plays a very important role in the subject's activity and that is why it is directly regulated not only by the goal. However, in another respect our positions appear to diverge. When Sagatovsky points out that activity is a complex hierarchical system of actions and operations he is probably very close to identifying activity with the system. In my view, this approach does not pay enough attention or even totally ignores the most important aspect of man's mental life, i.e. the mental aspect as a non-disjunctive process which is an essential component of any activity on the part of the subject.

V.V. Davydov does not take into account either, or at least underestimates the fundamentally important role of the mental aspect as a process in the activity of the subject. In his second text he objects to the provision that I develop concerning the secondary and intermittent nature of actions and operations[2] in relation to the mental aspect as a process and cites the following two arguments. Firstly, action itself can be presented as a process (unfortunately, Davydov did not show how to do that and that is why it is difficult to discuss this assertion). Secondly, action is accepted (?) as the initial unit of mental activity. However, just to state that something is accepted is not an argument in a scientific discussion. Let us nevertheless analyze this point.

Indeed, in his "Elements of General Psychology" S.L. Rubinshtein advanced and provided a detailed justification of the idea that the "unit" of behavior is an act, just as the "unit" of activity in general is action.[3] However, this did not imply that the action and the act form the subject matter of psychology. They are studied outside psychology as well, and are not its exclusive object of study. That is why in order to define more clearly the subject matter of psychology and, first of all, in order to determine more rigorously the specifically psychological aspect of the subject, his activity and its components (actions, etc.), in the 1950s, S.L. Rubinshtein elaborated the theory of the mental aspect as a process which his students continue to develop today. According to this theory, the mental aspect as a process — in relation to its results — forms the principal content of the subject matter of psychology (together with mental characteristics, states and other personal qualities of man). That is why the "unit" or the "cell" is no longer an action or an act as a whole, but the mental act as an inseparable unity of two opposite components

— cognitive and affective (the second one is taken in Spinoza's sense).[4]

V.V. Davydov does not approve of L.S. Vygotsky's not elaborating the problem of (initially practical) activity even though he used the word "activity" (but not the concept or the term). Today psychology and philosophy urgently need a correct evaluation of Vygotsky's cultural and historical theory because, as has been stated above, in the last decade or so alone some psychologists and philosophers all of a sudden have begun to regard Vygotsky's non-activity approach precisely as the activity approach. This has resulted in a paradoxical situation: many decades after the first in-depth studies into activity problems which are still being studied today, all of a sudden we no longer understand each other in our psychology as regards what activity is and what it is not. Therefore, when we analyze views on Vygotsky's theoretical research that are diametrically opposed to each other, we also discover the most recent mutually exclusive approaches to the problem of activity and thus get an even better understanding of it.

Davydov advances a number of arguments to justify his views on Vygotsky's theory. First of all, he sites the familiar provision from A.N. Leontiev's article on Vygotsky's death (1934). However, what is Leontiev's understanding of activity there? In two instances he links the problem of activity with man's sociality and his mind (and rightly so); in the third instance he explicitly writes about "the activity of human consciousness," however not even a mention is made of the initial practical essence of activity. But this is indeed the crux of the problem. Moreover, expounding (after Vygotsky) the main laws of the development of the human mind (the transformation of the social into the individual and psychological, the role of speech, etc.) Leontiev, just like Vygotsky, uses only the word but not the concept "activity" (in its strict sense). Nothing will fundamentally change in his exposition even if another word is substituted for this one (for example, mental functions). Vygotsky did just that, for example, in the instance Davydov mentions when he sites Vygotsky's reference to collective social activity (in his first and main text on this question, Vygotsky did not even use the word "activity" at all).[5]

However, for the benefit of our argument today (for example, with V.N. Sagatovsky), let us note that when Leontiev, as early as 1934, wrote about "the mental aspect as activity," about "the activity of human consciousness," etc., he in fact came up against a problem which many scholars have not sufficiently understood to this day. In our opinion, it is best to formulate and address this problem through a non-disjunctive division of the subject's practical and mental activity which are initially inseparably interrelated. The activity of consciousness, mental activity, etc., are often mentioned without posing the problem so explicitly and as a result the initial practical (only in this sense truly social) essence of activity is underestimated or even ignored again and again. If, however, activity is understood "only" as social and not as practical, then

once again a very one-sided and, ultimately, inadequate interpretation is given of its sociality. In this context let us continue analyzing V.V. Davydov's objections to my position.

Davydov observes that, no matter what my position is, according to Vygotsky, the "actual cause" of the child's mental development is not speech, sign, etc., but the social situation which in its content coincides with the concept of leading activity (in the sense in which Leontiev used this term). Indeed, in a number of his works written in 1932-1934, Vygotsky set forth many interesting ideas concerning the initial social situation of the child's development; however, in general, he did not connect it with children's practical activity. It is not surprising, therefore, that in his own analysis of the social situation Vygotsky is not fully consistent either, still insisting (although not as categorically as in 1929-1931) that a small child initially "passes through an animal-like stage of development."[6]

Finally, one last argument V.V. Davydov uses in his polemic with me is as follows: Vygotsky employed the concept "psychological tool" in a sense directly analogous to the concept "material tool" which in Marxist theory characterizes labor activity. In our opinion, however, the point is precisely that Vygotsky drew only an analogy between psychological tools (i.e. signs) and labor tools. He wrote, "Just as the use of a certain tool determines the entire structure of a labor operation, the nature of the sign being used is the principal element depending upon which all the rest of the process is structured"[7], i.e. it represents the highest specifically psychological human function. In our opinion, we can draw an analogy precisely between different, distinct, disjunctive, independent and, as it were, parallel objects (when one of them is not necessarily incorporated into another), otherwise, it is out of place and misleading. For example, no analogy can be established between ordinary window glass and its transparency. For the same reason, an analogy between psychological tools (means, etc.) and labor tools is inadequate. This analogy would in fact refer to something that cannot be, namely that the human mind and its "tools" are initially not part of practical labor activity and thereby are not formed in it. This inadequate conclusion is also suggested by Vygotsky's peculiar "operationalism": in his opinion, the labor operation is determined only by the tool, and not by the object viewed as the basis for man's interaction with the world.

Thus, our consideration reveals over and over again that the problem of the initial practical activity has not received adequate treatment in the cultural-historical theory developed by Vygotsky or in the works by his modern followers (however, applied to some other questions, this theory has yielded a number of interesting results). This approach does not take full account of man's initial practical interaction with the world which, if properly understood, offers the only real possibility for revealing the truly creative nature of activity.

As regards revealing the creative nature of activity in positive terms,

by and large, I agree with N.S. Zlobin, I.T. Kasavin, V.S. Shvyrev and others. Similarly, G.S. Batyshchev and I have long held very close views in giving the interiorization theory a critical assessment, a theory initially inadequate to reflect the problem of creativity.

From my point of view, thinking of any kind (both as the subject's activity and as a non-disjunctive mental process) is always a creative process, at least in the minimal degree. That is why the term "creative" is redundant here. Therefore, there is no justification for dividing thinking into reproductive and productive or creative. There is "just" thinking — man's independent search for and discovery of something that is substantially new.

1. See: K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, A.V. Brushlinsky. Philosophical and Psychological Conception of S.L. Rubinshtein. Moscow, 1989. (In Russian)
2. Of course, the secondary nature of activity (always intermittent) in relation to the mental aspect as a process (always continuous) does not mean that any intermittent action is always secondary or is derived from the continuous action. However, this question calls for a special analysis.
3. See: S.L. Rubinshtein. Elements of General Psychology. p. 537. (In Russian)
4. See: S.L. Rubinshtein. Being and Consciousness. Moscow, 1957, p. 7, 264 ff.
5. L.S. Vygotsky. Collected Works. Vol. 3, Moscow, Pedagogika Publishers, p. 145. (In Russian)
6. L.S. Vygotsky. Collected Works. Vol. 4, Moscow, Pedagogika Publishers, p. 306. [Emphasis added] (In Russian)
7. L.S. Vygotsky. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 117. [Emphasis added]

Chapter 25

RATIONAL LIMITS AND PROSPECTS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

By I.T. Kasavin

The discussion that has taken place has demonstrated that the understanding of the nature of activity and its ability to explain exhaustively all the diversity of man's world is implicitly based on the opposition of at least two concrete types of activity. It is, first, productive, goal-setting, creative activity that shifts the horizon of deobjectification and is focused on the personality and, second, reproductive, goal-attaining, impersonal activity constrained by certain programs and contexts. The participants in the discussion provide a definition of activity in general, compare it with specific types of human (and non-human) activeness and define the prospects of its analysis depending on which form of activity they adopt. This is, of course, how it should be because activity is a subject charged with important philosophical and axiological implications and requires as a point of departure not an impartial description, but a clear choice of value standards. Incidentally, this consideration also explains a certain limitation to any approach to activity which presupposes a hierarchy of human ways of exploring the world and places activity at one of the levels of this hierarchy (it is irrelevant whether it is the lowest or the highest one).

No matter how much I would like to go beyond these constraints in the analysis, they remain an insurmountable barrier. Proceeding from this consideration which highlights the general inherently contradictory nature of activity as a whole, we can arrive at the fundamental definition of activity. Activity combines in a remarkable manner the given nature of human existence, limited by social and personal contexts, and man's ability to go beyond their limits to restructure and change the very extent of his own limitations. Moreover, precisely because activity is locked in within culture, it is possible to define these limits, just as powder will not explode unless it is placed in an airtight container.

The contradiction between the bordered and the "transborder" nature of activity requires one clarification. It is clear that when man uses ready-made schemes, norms and ideals of activity given to him in advance in the process of exploring the world he can only reproduce the actual

limitations of his existence. In itself this fact is neither bad nor good; essentially, it is not even a fact since it is not placed within the system of human communication and social (and natural) development. Only in this context does it become evident that man's essence cannot be limited to activity aimed at reproducing certain socially significant objects or himself. This induces us to consider the nature of the process which relates to constructing schemes, norms and ideals of activity, a sort of extended reproduction of oneself. Where does the new quality of activity come from if in the process of such construction man deals only with the products of past labor or the relatively constant world of nature? Why didn't a similar question arise when we readily agreed that the use of ready-made standards of activity means only simple reproduction?

When man uses given or creates new programs of activity, he comes up against the fundamental indeterminateness of these programs themselves; they cannot be compared to a computer punch card or an experimental procedure for developing a conditioned reflex. In itself readiness to use and construct programs assumes choice and decision-making, features which therefore become central to human activity. At present, neurophysiological and psychological decision-making models are being actively developed.[1] In the course of their discussions investigators came to a rather broad interpretation of such a model as does not necessarily suggest that decision-making is well-thought-out and conscious. In this context interesting prospects open up for studying the process of making social decisions which is not reducible to interpretations appropriate for particular scientific disciplines.

Down this road a researcher inevitably confronts the problem of the rationality of human activity. The process of making decisions and making choices is usually regarded as rational if it meets certain criteria — if it is well-thought-out, goal-conforming, effective, etc. This approach leads us to the identification of rational activity with activity locked within a certain cultural framework because all such criteria are set by the cultural context. Consequently, human activeness which has certain rational bounds emerges as activity. In terms of choice a certain diversity of experience is "sieved through" the structure of a neuron, attitude or logical standard and acquires at the "output" a certain synthetic or organic unity that can serve as a guideline for a certain action or a set of concrete actions. Here, what limits our choice — the physiological or cultural "sieve" — is in fact irrelevant: neither the first nor the second have absolute significance, but both of them have a rather thin mesh. Another consideration is important, however: man cannot have two different heads, yet at a certain level of cultural development, he can compare and embrace totally opposite standards of socio-cultural rationality. When these standards (and not specific modes or programs of activity) thus coexist, are compared and assessed, this signifies a choice not within the framework of activity, but a choice between forms

of life or types of activity. Therefore, decision-making is a component of any activity. However, we shall describe as rational only that activity where the subject can and really does select his type of activity, exercising his choice in accordance with his view of the world. The openness of the subject to such a choice, the unpredictable nature of its result, which is not determined in advance, is a guarantee of the rationality of activity.

By way of example, let us take activity which was highly significant for man from ancient times to the Middle Ages — witchcraft. Imagined and real consequences of witchcraft usually led to social sanctions against the sorcerer, who, pursuing his own goals, naturally tried to avoid them. However, depending on the historical context, the social nature of the situation changes radically. In a primitive society, for example, the Zuni tribe of North American Indians, a man tried for witchcraft does not even try to deny his guilt despite the risk of getting the death penalty. Regardless of the actual degree of guilt and the concrete role of his magic in causing the damage that he is charged with, the person accused of witchcraft usually chooses an unconventional way to defend himself. In particular, he may start by looking for a "historical justification" for his actions, asserting that magic had been practiced by his ancestors or that "strangers" taught him witchcraft in early childhood and he would describe in detail different (often imagined) rituals and abilities that he allegedly possesses. By making a reference to a certain ancient tradition of his tribe, the defendant transfers part of his own guilt onto it, as it were, while , on the other hand, he presents himself as the focal point where mysterious uncontrollable magical forces act.

That is why an account of the "crime" is given in the form of allegations and specifications that reconstruct the whole context of witchcraft of which his act is a manifestation. Thus, the defendant transforms into a witness for the prosecution, as it were. His judges do not expect him to challenge facts or dispute his charges. On the contrary, they require him to validate a system of which they possess only one fragment. By this approach, in the minds of the tribesmen witchcraft acquires real existence sanctified by traditions and, as C. Levi-Strauss writes, "the defendant . . . gives the group the satisfaction of truth which is infinitely greater and richer than the satisfaction of justice that would have been achieved by execution."[2] In this way, from being a threat to the security of the group, witchcraft turns into its opposite — the guardian of its spiritual coherence.

The way this contradiction is resolved has a profound basis. The fact that the social life and consciousness of the tribe are locally bound and that the individual and his people are one, does not allow any significant element of the tradition to be sacrificed in the interests of one man who has suffered. That is why the means to criticize this tradition, in this case, witchcraft, are selected from the diversity of that same tradition and the criticism turns into clarification, additional details and the

development of the initial phenomena. In fact, no other criticism of witchcraft is possible in a primitive society where ". . . the choice is not between this system and another, but between the magical system and no system at all — that is, chaos."[3] And this, in fact, signifies the absence of any major choice in terms of the view of the world and, consequently, reveals the rational limitation of witchcraft and proves that it is turned in on itself.

On the other hand, the image of witchcraft in the late Middle Ages, be it in Charles de Coster's Thyl Ulenspiegel or in the theological treatise The Mallet of Witches, looks different. In this period, from being dominant, magic turns into one of many cultural traditions that exist alongside religion, art, philosophy, and science. Moreover, it comes into conflict with the reigning religious ideology and becomes an element of social opposition, and is grouped together with peasants' uprising, heresies and philosophical dissent. The Inquisition punishes witchcraft, burning and walling-in witches alive, understanding shrewdly that ultimately it poses a threat to the dominion of the Church. Indeed, satanic magic, i.e., witchcraft in its worst and most dangerous version, sought the sources of its force beyond the limits of the "world of living creatures" and, by implication, beyond the limits of the God-given social order. Theologian clearly differentiated between black (satanic) magic and white (natural) magic and did not try to condemn the latter if it did not threaten the powers-that-be because white magic limited itself to the sphere described in the "divine book," the Bible, and only tested different combinations of natural elements.

Let us recall the role magic and witchcraft with their view of the world played in inciting and sustaining the intellectual protest germinating in the heart of Thyl, the future fighter against the Spanish domination — the amulet with the ashes of Claes making his heart beat faster, the mysterious wedding with Nele ending in an unambiguous call to eliminate social evil personified by the seven deadly sins. There is profound significance in terms of world outlook that the mother of the leader of the Gueux turns out to be an insane witch (from the point of view of a law-abiding burgher!) who suffered at the hands of the Inquisition executioners. This is a clear reference to the feminine (active, leading) cause in a popular uprising, carried out by armed men with, a reference to the ideological basis of a social protest. Indeed, magic (especially demonic magic) was in fact almost the only intellectual alternative that the population could adopt in the struggle against feudal and Church domination; while peasants took up axes and scythes, their women practiced witchcraft and all of them channelled their activity (directly or indirectly) against the existing social order.

Witchcraft in the late Middle Ages questioned the validity of the social reality and in its own way called for new ideas and social arrangements. It had clear social content that was not limited by the meaning of magical rituals and served as a breeding ground for emerging Utopian

sentiments and teachings. Satan personified retribution against the unjust god of the churchmen and man became aware that he had strength and ability not given by God (but his own) to change the world. Emerging as a powerful revolutionary force, magic in fact encouraged man to make a free choice and to take his destiny into his own hands. Later, too, the ideology of the Reformation carried in itself a fair number of magical allusions: even when Martin Luther came down on the satanical and the secular — the seat of sin and free will (free will still represents "the best in man"), he attributed his criticism above all to rationalism and skepticism.[4] On the other hand, Protestantism which emphasizes the mystery of personal communion with God, treats magic as a recent ally that is no longer useful; this was also the attitude of the emerging bourgeoisie to its temporary ally in the bourgeois revolution — the peasantry, whose power it feared and whom it betrayed.

A look at witchcraft in historical perspective has demonstrated that it can acquire a broad social content and turn from a rationally limited into a rationally creative activity. This is one of the ways man's activity in general develops. The subject who creates schemes, norms and ideals of his own activity in the process of making a cultural choice is a person who plans his development and makes his own history. In this sense, rational activity represents man's universal activity, as he realizes himself, activity that breaks existing borders and ventures into the unknown.

1. See: Problems of Decision-Making. Moscow, 1976. (In Russian)
2. C. Levi-Strauss. Structural Anthropology. Doubleday, New York, 1967, p. 168.
3. C. Levi-Strauss. Ibid., p. 168.
4. See: M. Luther. On the Serfdom of the Will. In: Erasmus Desiderius . Philosophical Works. Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1968, p. 528. (In Russian)

Chapter 26

NOT BY DEED ALONE

By G.S. Batyshchev

I will present my replies to my critics in an order which reflects the growing degree of differences with them. I will out point to V.N. Sagatovsky that I have always believed and am still of the opinion that subject-subject relations are also inherent in the activity sphere. It is true that the nature of activity may not reveal itself fully, be somehow concealed by objectification or may manifest itself in false forms. But the way the problem is resolved is a totally different matter. Is the subject-subject relation inherent in the activity sphere only as its nature? Is it only something derivative, subordinate, and "monistically" deduced, only a "derivation and sublimation" of the fundamental subject-object relation? Or, conversely, can the subject-subject relation exist by itself, as a category which is no less independent or fundamental and, in the fullness of its being, is already outside and even above the activity sphere? My answer today (for the 1980s) is as follows: what is central to the subject-subject relation is not that it is inherent in the activity sphere but that it goes beyond its scope and generates, in a virtual or actualized form, a different ontological level which cannot be reduced to the activity sphere. This also holds true of creativity: even though it is inherent in (creative) activity, creativity itself is a basic special relation between subjects (and also an endowment) that stands outside and above the activity sphere.

I agree with A.V. Brushlinsky that the activity sphere can be adequately understood only when it is correlated with other levels of man's environment, in the context of other levels of relations, but not as a single "monistic" beginning. However, in this connection we should stress that to make this adequate correlation, we need a totally different logic, a distinct cultural, intellectual and axiological atmosphere, which is unlike substantialism just as much as anti-substantialism. We need a dialectic that is not of the Hegelian or panlogistic type. We need polyphony of lives and destinies and, therefore, of ideas, we need unlimited co-creation. Proceeding from these considerations, I will be guided by the requirements of a philosophical theory: a) it must be adequate in humanitarian terms, i.e., able to account for the multi-level complexity of man's objective world, without oversimplifying things with schemes or the "monism" of the substantialistic order; b) it must be ade-

quate in pedagogical terms, i.e., able to understand how man's essential features emerge and improve, a process which can never be completed; c) it must be adequate in environmental terms, i.e., able to give a radical and self-critical answer in the face of the global environmental threat; d) it must be adequate in axiological terms, i.e., able to incorporate into itself and to direct man's search for his global mission in the Universe where he is a co-creator of the cosmogenesis, of its limitless and inexhaustible objective dialectic. In the light of these considerations I will provide answers to my other opponents.

I agree with V.S. Shvyrev that we should continue to keep the concept of activity as rich in content as possible and prevent it from becoming defective (which is not the same as giving it an unduly "broad" interpretation). This concept has vast potential, and not only for scientific knowledge but also in terms of its implications for morality, art and, more generally speaking, culture which lead to sophisticated in-depth communication . . . When activity is thus fully realized, it deserves to be described as a "deed." However, was I not one of those who tried to make the concept of activity as rich in content as possible and has this not resulted in what now appears to be a paradox — the revelation that the sphere of activity is, as a matter of principle, limited, i.e., it has thresholds of deobjectification and therefore can be exhausted?

I fully agree with Shvyrev's insistence on the interparadigmal approach. He could note that we have no argument over this point. It is, of course, important to assert man's openness to the existence that encompasses him. And this naturally holds true of the activity sphere. However, the crux of the problem is this — can man's most radical openness be ensured only from within activity as a self-sufficient sphere or in its most radical and profound aspects can openness not be ensured from within this sphere and is something needed that goes beyond activity? The solution to this problem is strictly dependent upon the choice between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. If we work on the assumption that man stands above all else in the world and represents its center, then each of us needs only limited — from top to bottom — openness to reality that we may yet encounter which, however, is condemned to being lower, relatively simpler and grosser than we, the supreme beings of the Universe, are. In this case we need only object-directed openness, oriented toward the Universe downgraded to scenery and a repository of substances, energy and information which we need to arm and equip ourselves with, to subjugate and lord it over, to "transcend" in the process of exploring and acquiring them. The scope of advisability here can be expanded, but not axiological prospects, since in axiological terms man is set on self-assertion and the rest of the world for him is empty in value terms. Here, possibilities for an objective self-critical analysis of one's own goal-setting have been lost. This openness (only from top to bottom) is limited by the universal human self-measure, self-assertion and the position of exploration.

If man decisively opts for the alternative non-anthropocentric solution, which excludes any self-centrism, he no longer has the limitations imposed by the self-measure and has to show a fundamentally more profound and multi-level openness to reality of any possible degree of complexity and "organization." Then the view of man as the explorer of the world, asserting himself and standing above it is no longer valid. Then axiological monopoly and value deafness to the reality outside man are no longer acceptable. Then man must be able and ready to be self-critical and effect changes in himself much more radical and far-reaching than are possible from within the activity approach following the logic of the deed. This ability or readiness, which exploration and acquisition do not allow in principle, emerge on the basis of a fundamentally different logic, the logic of an in-depth ontological communication into which subjects enter, inter alia, through the above-threshold aspects of their existence — beyond activity and passivity of any kind. What cannot be "achieved" by one's own activity of any kind or even collective human activity can be acquired as a gift of an encounter, as an extra-activity endowment thanks to the fact that subjects, whose configurations of the below-threshold zones can sharply contrast with each other typologically or in terms of their levels, fully and mutually accept communication and make it part of themselves. V.S. Shvyrev has probably not yet made up his mind about his choice.

For the time being, there is nothing better or more perfect for Shvyrev or, generally speaking, for the proponents of the activity approach than self-activity; they believe that an alternative to it is the quietist passivity. But this is not true. The gift of the encounter marks a totally different state — it is by no means quietism; in this state man does not vegetate his life away or parasitize on other people's endowments instead of relying on his own talents. Just the opposite, it is a state of great alertness, when man faces up to his problems squarely, and is fully aware of his involvement and responsibility, and that his own strengths and abilities (including those of mankind as a whole) are not enough in principle; in this man is very much dissatisfied with himself (also in terms of all universal human standards), he is keenly looking out and yearning in his soul for better and nobler things that "are not made by us at all" (P.Y. Chaadayev). In this state we must not necessarily spend excessive energy in our deed either by bursting naively into bustling activity, trying some sly move or demonstrating "heroic enthusiasm;" on the contrary, we must restrain all activity forces and simply listen to the quiet peace within us. This takes a different kind of courage, man must wait patiently for the new endowment to emerge within, because here we are dealing with the continuing genesis of man, his incompleteness, because the source from which he drinks never runs dry and is bottomless; we are speaking not only about the initial endowments of childhood, but also about the possibility of multiplying them (or, alas, of losing them), we are referring to the creative openness which R.M.

Rilke described as "eternal childhood." What distinguished people who truly created culture from overzealous self-proclaimed mountebanks was precisely restraint and patience in the face of what was impossible or unworthy to obtain unilaterally, on their own. They were aware that the precious gift of talent could not be replaced by anything else or forced into being artificially. However, we can understand this not on the basis of the logic of the unfurling activity sphere, but relying on the logic of in-depth communication.

V.S. Shvyrev is concerned about losing the feedback from the "resistance of reality," he is concerned by the "ontology" of creativity. Excellent! However, let us also take this concern beyond the limited level of deobjectification of objects and results to the logic of the encounter between subjects and their mutual involvement, while each of them preserves his dominance over the other, especially when their types and levels of culture contrast sharply. This gives us more than just the "resistance" of subjectless reality; different levels of reality open themselves to us in an atmosphere of polyphony and non-self-centrism (neither of us claims to be the Center of the Universe or wants mankind to become this Center). Here, we get an even greater objectivity that encompasses all possible levels, including the axiological one. What is not possible monologically is, therefore, possible in polyphony.

In my works that came out in the 1960s, the emphasis was precisely on the self-change of the subject in activity. Today, Shvyrev is worried about whether or not I have placed it outside the scope of activity. No, not entirely. The important thing is to preserve the multi-level principle; it is inadmissible to transfer the modes of activity appropriate at the level of objective existence or the biological level to the subjective world per se. Man should not intrude into his own soul (or the soul of another person, which is even worse) or his spiritual life by materialistic techno-rationalistic techniques because, instead of producing the desired result of self-education, purification or self-improvement, this makes his soul and spirit callous, materialistic and degenerate, and causes almost irreparable damage. However, the activity approach to interiorization is not only uncritical of the better instances where different modes of activity are thus transferred from one level to another, it moreover replaces the entire intellectual and spiritual world with the totality of the results produced in the course of the interiorization of the objective activity. How can we protect and save the soul from the rude and unfeeling intrusion of engineering and materialistic reason? This is perhaps how we can do it — we must make every activity aimed at bringing about self-change adequate at least in humanistic terms, organize it on the basis of hierarchically appropriate principles and begin by accepting meanings that represent unquestionable values that are not only superior but are also explicitly treated as more noble; they cannot be acquired or subjected to "transcendence;" they are as a matter of principle placed above any inherent advisability and, for our purposes,

are regarded as criteria. The principal element of self-change — creative self-improvement — cannot be based on man's self-measure, self-assertion or pursuit of his own goals. Creativity per se, as a relation, is something fundamentally larger than the result of deeds, it is precisely an endowment, it is granted as a gift by the logic of an in-depth encounter and has a subject-to-subject mode of existence.

V.V. Davydov claims that his "monistic" position would make it possible to have any possible object given in advance, to have a "cell" that could be used to generate all levels from it. However, this is a monological, self-centrist claim which has no basis without the assumption that man asserts himself as the "supreme" being, a point Davydov himself admits. I think I have made a convincing case against this view. It is not surprising that, under this approach, levels that do not fit in with this World Order nor comply with its regulations are perceived as violations of the order, eclecticism, etc. But another thing is more significant, it is the admission that this position inevitably entails the self-measure and the overriding role of "needs and wants." But when is man truly human? Not when his actions are determined "from below," but when in his motivation he can resist the dictat of his needs, rise above any of his wants and interests and act irrespective of them. Man begins when he is able to judge all his needs and interests independently (including those that characterize him as a species-being) in accordance with objective criteria and, in the case of a spiritually mature man, in accordance with the objective criteria of unquestionable values. Man does not attain his true self for the first time when he prefers what is useful, pleasing or interesting for him; that happens when he opts for truly good and beautiful things that attract him. The mystery and cause of man's entire development and, more importantly, his self-improvement lies in his ability to dominate (in A.A. Ukhtomsky's sense of the word) not himself, but others, something else or someone else, not what is "his," but what belongs to "others," not his little world but the entire boundless Universe. Without understanding this dominance and its decisive role, it is impossible to comprehend well not only more or less adequate forms of man's rise over history, but even the forms of his socially organized degradation, when he becomes wild in a civilized way or loses his personality under the pressure of "determinations from below."

When V.V. Davydov speaks about the "need" for morality, values and intellectual gratification, he does not take genuine, but only perverted, degraded forms as the real objective basis. When morality is held hostage to need determinations, only its superficial likeness remains, only that which mimics it, only its moralizing outward shell. When "values" depend upon and derive from "needs," in reality, they turn out to be something worse than empty token words, they are ghastly signs of degradation, of the entropy of man's soul and spirit, by no means imagined and, unfortunately, only too real. Are there any special merits

in Davydov's approach that enable it, in the face of real hedonistic and utilitarian processes where culture's only function is "to please," to protect the distinctive features of man's subjective personal world and its intellectual independence, and to defend it from the advancing degradation trying to take its place, armed with civilized behavior and a love for total success? If there aren't, and, moreover, if the author tends to present signs of degradation as designs to follow, then, I think, we should take an even closer look at the logic of this approach and its underlying assumptions.

I was surprised at N.S. Zlobin's conclusion that there was an "angry" note to my presentation. But it is up to him to clarify his reasons for that. At the same time he should not forget that he himself accuses me of an "impure peddling form" of practice, "otherness of the absolute spirit," etc. Never mind. However, is it not true that today's global environmental catastrophe has revealed that almost all of mankind's practice has led to the accumulation and reproduction on a huge scale of its multilevel real impurity? Would it be appropriate for me to whitewash and present in ideologically "pure" forms all those ideas that are in fact impure because they serve and encourage, promote and play into the hands of those truly impure forces of alienated and objectified "practice" which is pernicious both to the human soul and to all other inhabitants of the Earth's biosphere? Is it not true that the self-measure and all kinds of self-interests (including in the general human sense) constitute the heart of the matter? Is it not true that our actions should be properly evaluated without polishing things up? And is it not time to wonder whether the pan-activity "monistic" approach has also had a role to play in the present situation?

As for the "absolute spirit," it does not scare me. One can get scared, be afraid or feel the need to defend oneself in advance against everything absolute (particularly, absolute unquestionable values) only if one takes the position of self-centrism, self-measure and self-assertion. The tone then is set by competitive perception, jealousy of oneself which belittles what is grand, slings dirt on what is pure and turns good into evil. However, I find quite a different logic attractive, it is polyphonic and co-creative and, in place of the turmoil resulting from the rejection of value- and meaning-related parameters of cosmogenesis, has involvement and mutual attraction of all to everyone.[1] In any substantialistic version, the image of dialectics suppresses and "transcends" human independence, and turns it into its "otherness." Man rebels in the anti-substantialist version, but in co-creation he is in a state of polyphony.

N.S. Zlobin undertakes to explain my present views on the basis of their previous evolution. It is true that my search for answers to problems was a painful process for me because I indeed suffered in my soul over both substantialism and anti-substantialism. It was not an abstract matter for me but the vital and crucial problem that, in the logic (every logic!) of substantialism, the ontological subject-to-subject relation and, con-

sequently, ontological subjectivity is downgraded and destroyed, its ontology disintegrates and it is transformed into an ephemeral fiction or an auxiliary function. It was not possible to avoid damaging the subject-to-subject relation or to "transcend" it honestly for the sake of an honest statement asserting the subject-object relation. It was also no less a crucial problem for me that in the logic of anti-substantialism (once again every logic!), conversely, much of what one has to brave not only at the objective level, but also at the level of results and the axiological level, is, alas, also subjected to a defective pseudo-perception, downgraded or "transcended" in strictly material, objective and epic terms. It was not possible to avoid disavowing honestly those objective meanings which must be learned when one honestly and consistently asserts the sovereignty of the subject-man by "transcending" everything else. I have abandoned and left behind both these conceptual trends and positions, considering them to be two forms of geo- and anthropocentrism. Yet there was a reason to resolve this problem — to transcend the very logic of transcendence and to move toward the logic of in-depth communication, subject-to-subject involvement and polyphony.

1. The reader may see how this logic, the logic of a new thinking in philosophy and educational sciences, is used to elaborate a socially innovative project and applied to practical problems of restructuring the society through the restructuring of the educational sphere in a series of my articles published in the Uchitelskaya Gazeta (Teachers' Gazette) in 1988 (March 3, March 17, March 31, April 14, May 5, May 12, May 24, May 28, September 29, November 29, December 29). (In Russian)

Chapter 27

ACTIVITY AND FREEDOM

By A.L. Nikiforov

I am very grateful to those who have expressed critical remarks concerning my understanding of activity because they make it possible for me to clarify and develop this understanding. The thrust of the criticism addressed to me was that I give too narrow an interpretation of activity by defining it as machine-like, regulated and goal-directed activeness. This is to nobody's liking. Most of the authors want to speak about activity as goal-setting creative activeness and I fully agree with this. For me, by its nature activity is always creativity and not machine-like repetition of prescribed operations. However, I want to understand what accounts for the creative nature of activity and I find the source of creativity in the personality of the agent. To illustrate this point, I will split activity into two aspects — rational, goal-directed, regulated, paradigmal, etc., activity (in a special sense) and behavioral activity related to the expression of the special features of the personality of the acting subject. In general philosophical terms these two aspects are indivisibly connected and that is why activity, being at the same time the attainment of a certain goal and the self-expression of the subject, always emerges as creativity. An accidental use of one and the same term to describe both activity and one of its aspects probably caused the misunderstanding.

However activity is creativity only in its philosophical essence, only in the ideal world of philosophical abstractions. In its real manifestation more often than not it emerges as routine, machine-like activeness which does not contain even a hint of creativity or "goal-setting," if preferable. I cannot help wondering why. Why does the goal-setting creative activity that realizes man's essential powers, which we discuss with such interest almost never occur in real life? The answer appears to be simple: only free activity can be creative. That is why when we speak about activity we cannot do without the concept of freedom because these two concepts are not only interrelated but almost identical, which I will try to demonstrate.

Let us begin with some general idea of freedom, for example, with the definition proposed by Spinoza. He writes, "That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its own nature alone, and is determined to action by itself alone. That thing, on the other hand, is called necessary, or rather called induced, which by another is determined to

existence and action in a fixed and prescribed manner."[1] On the basis of this general definition of freedom in a fairly evident way we get the definition of free activity — activity is free if it is determined only by the will and desire of the acting subject and, conversely, if activity does not depend on the will and desire of the subject, then it is not free. But is activeness that is not free really activity?

Let us consider the opposite term of free activity — unfree or "forced" activity. A slave driven by a whip to work at a plantation or a worker on an assembly line performing certain operations uses certain means and obtains certain results, but he does it against his will and all his actions are strictly regulated by external coercion. This activeness on the part of man is similar to the "activeness" of a stone that is flying in the air and even hits a certain target, not because it wants to, but as it is driven by an impulse of an external force. And just as we do not regard the activeness of a flying stone as activity, similarly, we cannot describe man's forced activeness as activity . This simple argument demonstrates that freedom is an inherent feature of activity.

Sometimes, simplifying the well-known ideas of F. Engels[2], freedom is presented as the insight into necessity. In his activity, man is constrained by the existing natural and social conditions, by the ties of things and phenomena that conform to laws, by the resources of his own physical and intellectual powers, and by his interrelations with other people. Without knowing these conditions and laws, he will try to act at the whim of his capricious will, but he will make mistakes in whatever he does, and more likely than not, he will not succeed in anything. A child trying to put colored pieces into a jigsaw puzzle combines them every which way, but he does not get the pattern he wants. However, the more complete man's knowledge of the laws of nature and society, the more successful his actions. In this connection, F. Engels wrote, "Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. . . Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject."[3]

No one will argue that the better we know the natural and social conditions of life, the more effective our activity will be. However, it is not effectiveness but freedom of activity that is at issue. In this context, successful activity is often identified with free activity. However, successful activity may well be forced, i.e. unfree. Let us assume that we have fully understood the connections between things and the conditions in which we intend to act. It is quite possible that under certain circumstances, one way to attain the goal will be most effective. Having discovered it, we will be forced to act only in this way driven by a necessity of which we have become aware, and not in some other manner. But does yielding to necessity equal freedom? Understanding necessity — conditions and laws — is one of the conditions of freedom, but it is not freedom itself.

It is possible to identify free activity with activity that conforms to law and necessity only if we assume man to be a very rational being who in his actions relies only on reason and nothing else. Here, once again, the abstract approach manifests itself. It treats man only as a human-species being, only as an impersonal representative of society, class or group. Spinoza, for example, with whose definition we began our consideration, believed that fits of passion make man unfree and described as free only that man "who lives according to the dictates of reason alone. . ."[4] If the goal is set and the most rational way of attaining it is known, then a "sensible" man will discard pity, compassion and other similar "sentiments" and travel the road he has to go with the ruthless consistency of a machine. If man were such a logical machine, then indeed freedom would be proportionate to his knowledge: the more a man knows, the more rational and successful is his activity.

Fortunately, people listen to the voice of passions and moral sense much more often than they do to the voice of reason. That is why even in those cases when a man knows a quick and effective way to attain a goal, he does not always follow that road. And in this lies one of the manifestations of his freedom. If freedom is identified with knowledge and compliance with necessity, the result is that man is identified with a logical machine and his freedom is in fact negated.

It appears that in our current literature the understanding of freedom as the possibility of choice is the most widely-held view, i.e., if a man has a choice, he is free. Let us take the three major elements of activity — the conditions under which we act, the goal and the ways to attain it. If all these elements are determined by natural or social necessity, then activity will of course be unfree. The possibility of choosing certain ways, setting different goals and selecting the conditions of activity makes it increasingly more free. A simple illustration. You are at home and hungry. This sets the conditions. Let us assume that there is nothing in your freezer except eggs. In this case the goal is also set — to fry eggs. If the range in your apartment is out of order, there is only one way out — to drink raw eggs. Here, everything is determined: the conditions, the goal and the way out and your activity will be fully induced. But if we assume that the range works, then you have a choice: to boil your eggs or to fry them, etc. When in addition to the eggs your fridge contains Hungarian salami, a piece of Swiss cheese, fish, and a pot of Ukrainian borsch, and when there are also cucumbers, tomatoes and fruit, then you also have the possibility of choosing your goal. Finally, sometimes you can also choose the conditions of activity, in this case to stay at home or to visit someone or, perhaps, even to eat out. When we speak about freedom, most often we in fact have in mind the possibility of choosing, and if we have this possibility we consider ourselves free.

Choice makes it possible for the subject to manifest the special features of his personality in activeness, i.e., it adds the behavioral dimension to it. Induced activity can never be a means of self-expression: the

conditions, the goal and the ways, everything is forced upon the subject from outside, he does not set the goal, he does not select the ways, and it is precisely in these decisions that the individual features of his thinking, his moral attitude, etc., manifest themselves. When the subject is engaged in an induced activity, he has to play the role of a insensitive automaton, a puppet controlled from outside. But as soon as there is a choice, i.e. freedom, the chance for self-expression emerges, and it is a precondition for creativity. And the freer activeness is, the more pronounced and singular are the manifestations of the special features of the acting subject, the more it approaches activity. What is it that limits our choice, that hampers our free choice of conditions, goals, and means?

First of all, of course, it is the objective ties conforming to laws that exist between the conditions of activity, its goal and the ways to achieve it. For example, in the summertime, you cannot set yourself the goal of going skiing or in winter of going off mushroom-picking — the objective conditions limit your choice. In turn, the goal also limits the set of ways to attain it. A sieve is no good for you to carry water in and a hammer won't do to cut wood. However, we easily reconcile ourselves to the limitations imposed on the freedom of choice by nature and we do not consider them to be limits to our freedom. In this context, understanding the laws of nature enables man to define more clearly the limits of his choice, to act successfully within these limits and to take decisions with knowledge of the subject.

Hatred and anger are generated by social limitations on choice. Indeed, for example, I know that I have a choice, but some people, society or the state deprive me of it, narrowing my choice so much that it almost equals zero. I know that there are cities flooded with lights, but I cannot leave the village in the middle of nowhere and not because the laws of nature stand in my way — I would reconcile myself to this, but because I am bound hand and foot by the social relations that tie me down to one place. I know that there is an interesting job, but it is not offered to me and someone else fills the vacancy. I know that it is much faster and easier to get where I want by car than by riding on a crowded bus, but I have no money for a taxi, etc. Moreover, there are people living next to me who enjoy things that are of reach for me, whose range of choice is much wider and who, therefore, are much freer than I am. When it is said that freedom of personality is related to the freedom of society, that this latter freedom serves as a basis for personal freedom, it is true in the sense that society that creates a set of possibilities for an individual from which he can choose. That is why the larger the set the society has, the more it offers the people who live in it. For example, the train, the car and the plane have considerably expanded the choice of means of travel. Telegraph, telephone and radio have expanded the possibilities of communication, etc. However, the point is that the opportunities that exist in a society are by no means always accessible to each its members.

That is why if freedom of society is understood in terms of how wide a choice it can in principle offer to its members, then this freedom may well coexist with various kinds of limitations that restrict the choice of certain citizens or large sectors of the population. It isn't a society that offers a wide choice that is truly free, but one where all citizens can choose from a range that is not limited by anything anymore.

No matter how valuable freedom of choice is, attaining it constitutes only the first stage of freedom. By its nature, this freedom is always limited: we always choose from what we are offered and cannot go beyond the given set of opportunities. We are limited by the scope of the existing range and if we are not satisfied with any of the possibilities then the necessity of choice turns into a lack of freedom. For example, you come to a store to buy yourself a suit or a dress. If there is only one suit your size in the store, you have no choice, you are forced to buy this suit even though you hate it. There is no freedom here. But suppose you are offered 10 or 20 suits. Now you have a choice and you have freedom. But if none of the suits being offered is to your liking and you have to choose from among ones that you all hate, then you can easily understand that the possibility of choice is not yet freedom. That is why I call freedom of choice only the first stage of freedom.

The second and the highest stage of freedom is freedom to create, the possibility not only of choosing from what we are offered by society and nature, but to create new possibilities. If maximum freedom of choice is in choosing not only ways, but also goals and even the conditions of activity, then freedom of creativity is the possibility of devising new ways, setting new goals and creating unprecedented conditions, guided only by one's own desires and preferences.

Activity that is free in this sense knows no limits and in all its aspects is determined only by the will of the acting subject. It can discover laws of nature, light up new stars, create new forms of life and slow down or speed up the flow of time. This activity is limited only by the special features of the acting subject and performs only one function — to serve as means of self-expression. Here the two functions of activity — to be a way for satisfying needs and means of self-expression — merge because the subject has only one need left — the need for self-expression and creative activity — the self-expression of the actor satisfies this need. That is why, as a result of such activity, only the special features of the acting subject manifest themselves and nothing else: since the actor is not limited by anything, all that has been created by his hands can only characterize him. It is clear that this freedom signifies omnipotence, that is why Spinoza, whose definition of freedom agrees with this view, attributes it only to nature or God. Since man is only a mode of nature and depends upon it, he is, consequently, deprived of such freedom.

But this is not correct! Man can attain such freedom, albeit rarely and only in individual instances, and the entire history of mankind proves that. If people only chose from what already existed, if they only adapted

to the existing possibilities, they would be similar to animals who also make choices. But people can also create, make new things, and add more and more new possibilities to the existing ones. Nature gave man legs, i.e., only one way to move in space. But he tamed the horse and created another travel possibility. He invented the cart, built a ship, a railroad, constructed a car, got a plane in the air and thereby vastly expanded the range of possible means of travel. And this goes for everything else. Yes, man is weak, limited, and mortal, but when he creates, he is as free as Spinoza's nature or God. Let us imagine that we are standing in the middle of a field and that there is only one road before us that we have to take. This is not freedom. If we have a few roads before us, then we have some freedom since we can choose one or another. This is freedom of choice. But some people just walk across the field, blazing a trail. They are the ones who have risen to the freedom of creativity.

Thus, we have unfree activeness, which we do not want to describe as activity, and free activeness, which contains freedom of choice and even creativity. If we turn to reality and try to assess different types of our contemporaries' activeness, we shall notice right away that the activeness of most of them lacks even freedom of choice. A worker performs the operations prescribed by a technological process; a director of a plant is in the stranglehold of a plan, guidelines from ministries or agencies, tariffs and salaries regulations, etc.; a chairman of a collective farm is forced to obey all instructions from the regional Party committee, including ones that regulate even the most trifling matters; and even a minister is no more than a clerk. All this goes to show that at all rungs of the social ladder, in all spheres of national economy activeness, as we define it, of the overwhelming majority of people is not activity and they themselves are not actors. N.S. Zlobin described my portrayal of activity as "absurd," but is it not better to characterize as absurd the reality in which an abstraction — one of the aspects of activity — can really exist?

This issue is connected with another interesting point — the question of the real subject of activity. V.N. Sagatovsky and N.S. Zlobin believe that the texts by Y.K. Pletnikov, V.Z. Kelle and myself seem to suggest the possibility of "subjectless" activity, which they reject categorically. I fully agree with them in this respect — activity is inconceivable without a subject. But, recognizing this fact, we must indicate the subject of activity in those numerous cases when he is probably not a separate individual. Manufacturing a plane, a car, a TV set, or building a high-rise building constitutes activity. But who is the subject of this activity? The answer will, of course, be that it is the collective — a workteam, a shop, a plant, or a collective farm. But material in our periodicals shows that to this day an individual collective can by no means be considered the subject of the activity in which it is engaged. It has almost no rights and bears no responsibility for the results of its activity. At this point, I do not want to and cannot pursue a discussion of who in reality the sub-

ject of activity is in our society because it is enough for me to state only one indisputable fact — in the majority of cases it is not an individual. And if this is so, activity for the people involved in it will be an impersonal rational machine that uses man as one of the means, as the "human factor." And instead of criticizing the portrayal of this activity, criticism would best be directed at the reality where such activity is almost universal.

I am afraid we argue too much about words and definitions when our principal task is a critical analysis of a reality that does not correspond to our perceptions of truly human life and activity. Unfortunately, in this publication once again we continued making scholastic distinctions and carrying on fruitless debates.

1. B. Spinoza. Ethics. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, 1052, p. 355.
2. K. Marx, F. Engels. Collected Works. Vol. 25, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1987, p. 105.
3. Ibid., p. 105.
4. B. Spinoza. Op. cit., p. 445.

Chapter 28

RETURNING TO THE PROBLEM OF METHOD. . .

By V.N. Sagatovsky

It would seem that the authors who have participated in the discussion of the activity problem have proceeded on the basis of a fairly evident methodological assumption: in order to study the concrete diversity of human activity systematically, it is necessary to rise from the everyday "household" level to the level of theoretical understanding and to find the place of activity among other basic characteristics of human existence. The participants in the discussion have obtained two kinds of results. On the one hand, we have understood each other better and expanded the "field of general significance" For example, some authors have agreed that it is necessary to treat activity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, that it cannot be reduced to subject-object relations; they have become aware of its axiological basis and that it is legitimate to speak about the limitations of activity. On the other hand, some fundamental differences have emerged and new problems have arisen: for example, the polemic between G.S. Batyshchev and V.V. Davydov, and, especially, the major problems raised by N.S. Zlobin when he was discussing the positions of G.S. Batyshchev and Y.K. Pletnikov.

However, there has been one author among us who has expressed serious doubts about the above evident methodological assumptions. A.L. Nikiforov has proposed a totally different "manner of philosophizing." From his point of view, the question of the place and significance of the concept of activity is unworthy of any attention, being a "typical example of a scholastic pseudo-problem." Any answer to similar questions "is determined only by personal preferences" and we should not discuss the problem "at such an abstract level," but apply the concept of activity, chosen in accordance with one's personal taste, to a specific problem. If it helps, so much the better, if it doesn't, then that's not so bad, either. The important thing is to keep it interesting! He believes that the desire to get scientifically valid solutions of general significance and the conviction that Marxist philosophy is a science are "not only a foolish but also harmful prejudice." Philosophy cannot be a science because it does not study the world, but man's relation to the world. Therefore, a philosopher must not strive for the objective truth.

Since my text in Section One of the book may probably serve as the most illustrative example of the "foolish and harmful prejudice" leading to an "abstract" discussion of "scholastic pseudo-problems," I am the one who should take issue with A.L. Nikiforov. He did not mince his words and I am also going to call a spade a spade because a question of extreme importance has been raised — what can people expect from a philosopher.

A.L. Nikiforov is justified in speaking out against the understanding of man as personified society and asserting that "man is more than just a product of social relations" and that it is no less important to describe activity "as creative self-expression by an individual." If this is done outside the scope of science (outside the scope of science does not, of course, mean that it is not science) then let activity of this kind be treated in art. If, however, we want to understand this problem in the framework of science, then we shall have to analyze the relationship between personality and individuality, essence and existence, universality and uniqueness (as was done, for example, by M.M. Bakhtin), the model of cognition in natural sciences and the humanities, etc. In brief, first we have to "hone" abstraction as a tool of analysis and then proceed from the abstract to the concrete. This is precisely what modern philosophy and psychology has been doing.[1]

We know rather well what the view of man as a cog in the social wheel leads to. And what if the opposite extreme view is adopted and man is reduced to self-expression of his uniqueness? Do we not then get — once again in practice — a narcissist egocentric person who is not ashamed to use social means for his games, a far cry from "bead games?" How can we formulate reasonable practical recommendations without scientific justification and proof? Of course, no moral responsibility — either personal or societal — can be reduced to scientific assumptions. But is this responsibility possible without them in our unconventional time?

Does this mean that I reduce philosophy to science? By no means. Philosophy is the living soul of culture (Marx), but at the same time it is an epoch captured in ideas (Hegel). The living soul cannot be reduced to thinking, but it necessarily incorporates it. Philosophy, just like any humanitarian field of knowledge is more than science or, to put it in milder terms, cannot be reduced to a model of science characteristic of natural sciences. Great philosophers can "outgrow" science, but first of all they must "rise up" to it. Even the most aphoristic and poetical thinkers, including Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, in some cases did not shun scientific proof. The alternative is a "no man's land" or writing metaphysical novels, as has been pointed out at one time by Carnap and Russell. This approach has long been rejected, but our opponent somehow manages to combine the most recent "anti-scientistic" vogue with the fad of the 1960s when Carnap was all the rage.

To deny that philosophy is a science is indefensible theoretically and immoral in practical terms. It is true that philosophy deals with man's

relation to the world. Underlying certain relations are values, the meanings of life which are accepted irrespective of scientific proof and cannot be exhaustively explained by science (just as, incidentally, any metaphor, symbol or esthetic image). Does this mean that we cannot and should not provide scientific answers to at least the following questions: what is the nature of different relations determined by the view of the world? What are they determined by? What life strategies follow from them? What are the historical and personal prospects of these strategies? Is it impossible to verify the validity of different answers to these questions? The only thing is we should not confuse the empirical basis of sciences that study culture and human activity with the empirical basis of physics. Questions of this kind cannot be answered without rationalizing the initial abstractions, the "matrices" of analysis which, among other things, incorporate the category of activity.

And what about the polyphony that always emerges in philosophy when concepts are defined (cf. hundreds of definitions of culture, etc.)? We should not confuse here an argument over words ("call it by whatever name") with the differentiation of concepts underpinned by objectively distinct elements and aspects of reality. Most of the terms in cases like that, if they are not adopted arbitrarily, usually describe different aspects and levels of understanding a complex multi-dimensional object. I have tried to demonstrate that with respect to activity (I will note in passing that A.V. Brushlinsky and I.T. Kasavin, who were sympathetic toward my idea concerning the multi-dimensional aspect of activity, did not notice the other aspect — the oppositions that have been singled out are not equal but represent stages in arriving at a more relevant meaning). But is not the choice of the actual meaning of a term subjective? In actual fact a term can have an objective basis which can be proven and verified (and these procedures constitute the essence of the scientific approach). This is the logic that I have followed. If we want the activity approach to meet two criteria 1) that it indeed be a fundamental approach capable of explaining the special nature of any social phenomena and any manifestation of their nature and 2) that the term "activity" describe in categoric terms a still "unoccupied" and unexplored aspect of social realities — then activity is such and such a thing. It is not difficult to see that this is by no means an argument over words: we are talking about discovering and clearly understanding a new aspect of and approach to human existence which, moreover, can be verified (both logically and empirically).

Indeed, is it not possible to verify and confirm whether there is a phenomenon in the body of culture which we describe as activity, whether it indeed performs the role that we ascribe to it and, finally, whether our understanding of it has precisely this methodological significance?

Speaking about the moral aspect, let us compare two positions. The position that I champion is that philosophy, describing the universal

features of man's relation to the world, must on the basis of certain values and ideals (which cannot be reduced to science, but which can be rationalized) reflect the phenomena under study in a system of concepts that would make it possible to elaborate a system of practically significant recommendations (a strategy of human activity). In addition to that, philosophy is also the relation to the world itself, i.e., that component of the view of the world which is perpetually developing and finds expression in theories, essays, aphorisms, insights, convictions, etc. (the living soul). Different thinkers combine these aspects to varying degrees. An approach that I cannot accept is: my preference and cash on the barrel! I wish we could get the champions of this approach to work on a self-financing basis and compete with some pop star. . . It is also unclear, by the way, why, with such an approach, one has to participate in a scientific discussion at all — let one hundred flowers blossom. . . .

Philosophy, as part of the view of the world, is not reducible to science, and to the cognitive aspect of consciousness in general; but the view of the world must have a basis, including a scientific one, and it is up to philosophy to provide it.

1. See the works by G.S. Batyshchev, V.P. Ivanov, M.S. Kagan, I.I. Rezvitsky, B.G. Ananyev, A.I. Leontiev, V.S. Merlin and others.

Chapter 29

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

By V.A. Lektorsky

The reader has had an opportunity to study and compare different views on the problem of activity. Although this subject has been studied rather intensively of late and a good deal has been written about it in different scientific disciplines that address these issues, still I believe that the fundamental philosophical assumptions underlying the understanding of activity have not been considered in full extent. An important step in this direction was the publication in 1984 in *Voprosy Filosofii* (*Questions of Philosophy*) of the proceedings of a roundtable discussion. However, it was not a discussion in the strict sense of the word. Yet it is only a discussion that makes it possible to see and describe clearly the strong and weak points of each approach, to present a system of arguments and counter-arguments, to clarify vaguely stated and undeveloped aspects of the problem and to determine avenues of further research. Now we have the results of the discussion on the problem of activity by specialists in dialectical and historical materialism, the theory of cognition, methodology of science, and psychology, who have different views of the nature of the problem and ways to solve it. Of course, the discussion did not result in a clear victory of some views (which was impossible) or a reconciliation of opposing approaches. However, I believe that the discussion makes it possible to take the consideration of these issues as a whole to a new level, provided its material is carefully studied and the necessary conclusions are drawn.

Under the terms that apply to books of this kind, I cannot evaluate the position of any specific participant in the discussion or pass judgements on the view which was defended in the course of it (even though I have my own view on the questions that have been discussed). I would like to share my ideas, generated by the discussion, which relate to the forms, ways and means of resolving the problem of activity.

First of all, I would like to focus on questions that are central to the on-going heated debate. I believe that these are not questions related to the study of activity (or action) as empirically registered facts of reality, but to the problem of activity as an explanatory principle, i.e., questions relating to the sphere of the so-called activity approach. When we empirically analyze different manifestations of human activity, at the everyday intuitive level, we distinguish more or less clearly what is activity

and what is not related to activity. For example, at this level we will never characterize as activity man's passive states, inaction, contemplation, or an emotion that appears almost overpowering, spontaneous unconscious images that surface from deep within his innermost soul, sharing in the world of cultural values, association with another person, many other forms and states of consciousness, etc. From this angle, activity and action account for a relatively narrow sphere of man's activeness in life. Of course, even when we study activity interpreted in this way, we come up against a number of important philosophical questions — the correlation of goals, means and results of activity, its norms and values, the interrelationship of conscious and unconscious components within it, etc.

Our literature on the problem of activity, however, does not address these questions, but focuses on issues that are much more fundamental in terms of the view of the world and methodology, i.e., can activity understood and interpreted in a specific way, provide the key to understanding what is specifically human in man, the diverse forms of his relation with the world and another person, the world of culture (including those forms that do not appear to be directly related to activity). It is clear that in this case, the concept of activity is no longer a way to register a certain given empirical reality, but a theoretical concept which makes it possible to elaborate an initial conceptual model for a theory or even a number of theories.

In general it should be said that one of the special features of science is that fairly often it uses concepts as the initial means for the elaboration of theoretical constructs which, in terms of their content, appear to have very little in common with the empirical facts that have to be explained. Thus, for example, in classical mechanics the laws of motion are formulated not by abstracting what is externally common to different types of motion — rectilinear, curvilinear, uniformly accelerated, etc. — but on the basis of studying one highly specific type of motion that does not exist in nature: rectilinear uniform motion. By consistently making the initial theoretical model more sophisticated, it becomes possible to understand all the diversity of different mechanical movements. In classical atom molecular theory, the motion of solids provides the key to explaining processes in gases and liquids which would seem to have nothing in common with solids or their movements. In elaborating his theory of political economy of capitalism, Marx adopted as his point of departure the act of exchange of one commodity for another, which does not exist in this form in a developed capitalist society. However, it was precisely on this initial basis that it became possible to develop a theory to explain the great diversity of economic processes which are very unlike the elementary exchange of commodities, for example, making profit on capital.

Therefore, if the task of every scientific theory is a comprehensive analysis of the diversity of facts that relate to its subject matter, then

this comprehensiveness, provided it is a means of theoretical explanation and not simple empirical registration, implies a certain "one-sidedness" — singling out such aspects, adopting such assumptions and initial ideas as can provide the key to the understanding of everything else. Without this "one-sidedness" which actually makes it possible to elaborate the initial ideal model of analysis, a theoretical system (no matter whether it relates to mechanical, organic or the so-called "harmonious" systems) just cannot be developed.

Of course, this model does not have to employ only one concept. There can be two, three or more. The other point of fundamental importance is that the initial concepts cannot simply register the aspects of the objective area under study that are empirically given. Otherwise, the theory would lose its explanatory power, and be rendered useless.

Going back to the subject of the book the reader is holding in his hands, and on the basis of what has been said above, I would like to make the following comment. The well-known fact that, apart from clearly manifested activity, man is also characterized by a number of other qualities (association, contemplation, axiological relation to the world and other people, etc.) can by no means be used as a theoretical argument against the activity approach (and it seems to me that some participants in the discussion resorted to such arguments).

The history of philosophy registered a long time ago the diverse manifestations of human nature, in particular, his search for the truth, good and beauty. Many philosophers have tried to understand and explain them. However, this is only possible through revealing the connection of these manifestations with something else that is different from them (otherwise we are stuck with a tautology: consciousness is consciousness, value is value, and personality is personality, etc.). The activity approach, which many proponents of Marxist philosophy relate to a certain interpretation of practical activity, represents an attempt to provide a theoretical explanation for a wide range of human phenomena that are difficult to understand to this day. It is not surprising that at present this approach generates such interest (and at the same time intense debate) among representatives of the most varied disciplines studying man, society and culture, ranging from the theory of cognition and the methodology of science to linguistics and psychology.

Valid theoretical criticism of the activity approach presupposes that it meets at least the following requirements. First of all, it must be able to justify that it is impossible to explain human phenomena on the basis of the activity principle and, secondly, on the basis of a different principle (or principles), it must elaborate a different theoretical system which can provide a better explanation for a certain diversity of facts. On the other hand, it is possible to demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach that we are discussing only if we are able to elaborate on the basis of the principle being considered such a theoretical structure as actually

works and enables us to study the world of empirical facts, doing it better than other theoretical constructs.

If the discussion proceeds only at the level of formulating general positions and is not accompanied by attempts to apply them constructively or to realize them in a more or less elaborate conceptual system applied to explain a specific objective area, the discussion proves relatively ineffective since to any principle formulated in abstract terms it is always possible to oppose another.

As for the activity approach, it must be noted that it has to its credit a whole number of rather successful and non-trivial objective realizations — in the theory of cognition, in the methodology of science, logic, psychology and linguistics. There are also certain difficulties in applying it, which, in turn, can be interpreted in different ways — either as proof that the approach itself is basically deficient or as indicative that more constructive work is needed to elaborate specific theoretical systems on the basis of the adopted principles. I believe it is important for me to repeat that the elaboration of the activity approach and the activity principle cannot be reduced to a simple analytical explanation of the concept used and presupposes first and foremost creative ("synthetic") theoretical work based on a certain ideal model. That is why I believe that we can never have a truly fruitful activity approach if we simply superimpose the concept of activity on known facts (yet this application of the activity approach also exists). In this latter case the concept and principle of activity essentially turn into empty terms and, no matter how we manipulate them, we shall not advance in a substantive analysis at all. Indeed, do we begin to understand such phenomena as association, dialogue, self-awareness, reflection, etc., better by simply calling them different "forms and types of activity" (just as the totality of subject-subject and subject-object relations)? In fact, in this case nothing radically changes in our understanding of the well-known essential manifestations of man because we have not constructed, on the basis of the activity approach, a specific theoretical scheme (or a whole number of such schemes).

In this connection, I would like to say that, in my opinion, the good thing about the discussion that has taken place is, among other things, that virtually all the participants discussed the activity approach, the concept and the problem of activity, not in abstract terms, not "by itself," but in the context of the questions central to modern research in the area of the methodology of science, the theory of science, psychology, social cognition, and the history of science. I believe that this type of discussion is most fruitful because only in this way can we truly reveal the potential and scope of the activity approach, explain its implicit preconditions and define controversial points that need to be investigated. I think that this publication marks a new departure in the discussion of all these problems as a whole.

My other comment is not connected with the formulation of my own

position on the subject of the discussion either (to repeat, I have no right to do so), but with the methods used and the way it was discussed. My comment concerns the question of whether philosophy can and must strive for scientific and well-reasoned formulations. One of the participants in our discussion has expressed the view that there are no statements of general significance in philosophy because philosophy does not provide knowledge of the world, but gives expression only to the subjective relation to the world (including even the gustatory relation).

I want to challenge this assertion. True, unlike natural sciences, philosophy deals primarily with man and his relation to the world. However, among other things, philosophical knowledge is special in that it attempts to provide a theoretical understanding and a justification for this relation in terms of man's world — both of the individual and the human society — in life and in the Cosmos. Indeed, among other things, philosophy can be helpful in solving personal problems, but it has a very special way of doing it — philosophy makes it possible for the individual to go beyond his limitations and to become part of universal knowledge and values. Of course, philosophical theories are always individual and personal, to a greater or lesser degree, and this is quite understandable, because philosophical problems relate to such questions as the meaning of life and man's view of the world, and naturally profoundly affect everyone's inner world. However, this is not the most important thing, which is that philosophy is not just an expression of a unique individual experience (or just the "transmission" of this experience from one individual to another), but is always an attempt to break out of subjective limitations. (As the experience of tackling individual personal problems shows, they can be solved only if the subject goes beyond his limitations and becomes part of something larger; by simply "pouring out unique individual experience," these problems cannot be resolved and sometimes can be made even worse.)

Of course, philosophy is not like physics and other theoretical systems that have been and are being elaborated on the same model. It should not be forgotten, however, that the first model of a theory as a special conceptual construct was provided by philosophy, and that attempts to reduce scientific knowledge to the knowledge of the type representative of physics and similar disciplines have today been generally recognized as self-defeating.

A discussion of the problem of activity can be fruitful only if the specific requirements of a philosophical theory are taken into account. I believe that in the discussion that has taken place, by and large these requirements have been met.

I hope that this book will promote the understanding and solution of a number of basic methodological problems in the disciplines that study man, society and culture.

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V.A. Lektorsky is a famous Soviet philosopher, who concentrated his early education on the problems of epistemology, the philosophy of science, and the history of contemporary philosophy. He is currently the head of the section on Theory of Knowledge in the Institute of Philosophy at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Science. His special area of concentration is research into the philosophical aspects of activity theory. He has done considerable original research into the role of artificial objects as mediators of activity, and has analyzed connections between exteriorization and interiorization of activity, and relations between individuals and joint activity.

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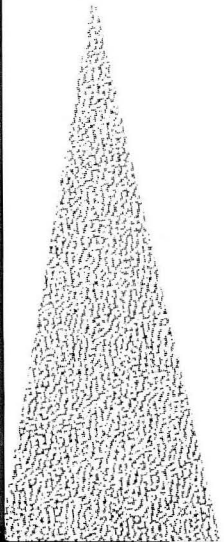

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