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The human being as the subject of activity[1]

O ser humano como sujeito da atividade

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the concept of activity as a fundamental category of psychology that enables a reconsideration of human nature as a subject. It is demonstrated that activity, in its specifically human sense, has not an adaptive but a productive-transformative character and serves as a mode of human existence in the world. Based on the analysis of cultural-historical and activity-based approaches, the essential features of human activity are substantiated, particularly its fundamental distinction from biological forms of activity. Special attention is given to the structure of activity (motive–goal–action–operation) and to the role of consciousness as a mechanism of its regulation. It is shown that the decisive factor in the formation of the human being as a subject of activity is the ability to transcend the limits of existing experience and to set new goals grounded in theoretical thinking. In this context, different types of knowledge and their influence on the character of activity are analyzed. It is argued that the key components of the mechanism of creative activity are reason, free will, and conscience, all of which are connected with the moral foundations of human existence.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa o conceito de atividade como categoria fundamental da psicologia, que permite repensar a natureza do ser humano como sujeito. Demonstra-se que a atividade, em seu sentido propriamente humano, não possui caráter adaptativo, mas produtivo-transformador, constituindo o modo de existência do homem no mundo. Com base na abordagem histórico-cultural e na teoria da atividade, fundamentam-se as características essenciais da atividade humana, evidenciando sua diferença qualitativa em relação às formas biológicas de atividade. É dada especial atenção à estrutura da atividade (motivo – objetivo – ação – operação) e ao papel da consciência como mecanismo de sua regulação. Argumenta-se que o fator decisivo na formação do ser humano como sujeito da atividade é sua capacidade de ultrapassar os limites da experiência anterior e estabelecer novos objetivos, fundamentados no pensamento teórico. Nesse contexto, analisam-se diferentes tipos de conhecimento e sua influência sobre o caráter da atividade. Defende-se que os componentes centrais do mecanismo da atividade criadora são o pensamento, a vontade livre e a consciência moral, intrinsecamente relacionados aos fundamentos éticos da existência humana. Destaca-se o papel do amor como condição da

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The role of love as a condition of the subject's inner freedom is also demonstrated. The conclusions distinguish between activity as a form of free, creative engagement and role behavior as the reproduction of socially prescribed norms, which is of fundamental importance for understanding human development.

Keywords: Activity. Subject. Consciousness. Theoretical thinking. Freedom.

liberdade interna do sujeito. Conclui-se com a distinção entre atividade como forma de ação criadora e comportamento de papel como reprodução de normas sociais, o que é fundamental para a compreensão do desenvolvimento humano.

Palavras-chave: Atividade. Sujeito. Consciência. Pensamento teórico. Liberdade.

Introduction

The problem of the subject belongs to the range of issues without which it is impossible to adequately understand contemporary education and, in particular, the theory of developmental learning. Within the conception of learning activity developed by V. V. Repkin in the framework of the cultural-historical and activity-based approaches, the subject occupies a central position, determining both the possibilities and the limits of human development in the educational process.

At the same time, the concept of the subject cannot be understood outside the analysis of activity. It is activity, in its specifically human – productive and transformative – sense, that defines the mode of human existence in the world and serves as the foundation for the formation of the subject. In this regard, turning to the category of activity is not only theoretically justified but also methodologically necessary.

The present text represents a scientifically edited and conceptually refined version of V. V. Repkin's lectures devoted to the analysis of activity and the subject. These lectures preserve the author's original logic, the depth of theoretical analysis, and the richness of illustrative examples, making it possible to reconstruct his integral vision of the problem.

This publication emerges within the context of long-standing academic collaboration with Brazilian scholars who have made a significant contribution to the development and international dissemination of ideas of developmental learning. A special role in this process has been played by

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Professor Roberto V. Puentes, whose scholarly work–focused on the in-depth analysis of the classics of developmental learning, the organization of translations and publications of their works, as well as the promotion of contemporary research–has contributed to the reinterpretation and recontextualization of Repkin's legacy in a new cultural context.

In this context, returning to the lectures of V. V. Repkin acquires particular significance. It is here that the concept of activity is presented as the foundation for understanding the subject, and the analysis of its structure and mechanisms–as a necessary condition for addressing the problem of human development.

I. The concept of activity as the foundation for understanding the subject

The concept of activity proved to be one of the most productive in twentieth-century scientific psychology. Psychologists owe this concept largely to Marx, who, in turn, adopted it from classical German philosophy.

The category of activity, introduced into scholarly discourse by German philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and most fully developed in the works of Hegel, was arguably one of the greatest achievements of modern philosophical and of modern philosophical and humanistic thought.

Prior to the emergence of this concept, dominant views portrayed the human being as entirely dependent on the surrounding world (or on the will of the Creator), that is, as subject to a predetermined life path. Regardless of whether this determinism was interpreted in religious or materialist terms, the individual was understood as wholly dependent on given circumstances and conditions of life.

In pedagogy, such views were reflected in the well-known notion of the child's mind as a "tabula rasa," on which life inscribes its marks. Naturally, within this framework, the role of the individual in determining their own destiny–and their responsibility for it–was reduced to a minimum.

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The merit of German philosophy lay in its attempt to view the human being from fundamentally different, humanistic positions. Its major representatives–Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel–sought to understand the human being not as a passive element of the world but as an active subject who creates their own life, transforms the world, and bears responsibility for the results of their activity.

Hence the heightened attention to problems of morality as the foundation of human life, and to questions of human activity, ideals, and aspirations. The attempt to introduce the category of activity as the source of human life and as the defining characteristic of the human mode of existence in the world was undoubtedly a major step forward.

This understanding of activity was taken up by Marx. Whatever assessment one may give to Marxism as an ideology, there can be no doubt that it represented a significant phenomenon in philosophical thought and culture. The effort to understand the human being, as well as the sources and possibilities of their development, was undoubtedly progressive.

One of the central and most important ideas in Marx's philosophy is the idea of activity as the foundation of human life–both at the level of humanity as a whole and of each individual. Within this framework, the human being appears not as a slave of circumstances but as the creator of their own life.

Of course, circumstances exert their influence. However, human freedom consists in the ability to decide whether to accept them as they are, submitting to them, or to transform them in accordance with one's needs, goals, and ideals. In this way, the individual becomes not a passive object of the historical process but an active subject of history.

It was precisely from Marxism that the category of activity was adopted by Russian psychologists in the 1920s and 1930s, when psychology faced the need to overcome the crisis that had emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. In search of new approaches, many researchers turned to Marx's philosophy.

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This turn proved particularly fruitful for Lev Vygotsky, who proposed the hypothesis of the sign as a specific psychological tool (VYGOTSKY, 1978).

However, Vygotsky did not directly develop the problem of activity itself.

Building on Vygotsky's ideas, the activity approach in psychology was actively developed in the 1930s–1940s by Aleksei Leontiev together with a group of his students and collaborators (P. Ya. Galperin, A. V. Zaporozhets, P. I. Zinchenko, among others) (LEONTIEV, 1978). At the same time, independently of Leontiev, the concept of activity was extensively employed by Sergei Rubinstein.

In both cases, the appeal to the concept of activity proved highly productive and led to the resolution of a number of major psychological problems.

The principal novelty of the activity approach lay in the fact that mental phenomena, and human consciousness in particular, came to be understood not as a separate realm of the ideal, but as a mechanism for the regulation of activity, generated by activity itself (LEONTIEV, 1978).

Of particular importance in this regard was the elaboration of the internal structure of activity.

Thus, the introduction of the category of activity made it possible to shift the focus of psychological analysis from isolated processes to the integrated system of human activity, within which consciousness appears as its necessary and developing component.

At the foundation of any activity lies a need which, when filled with specific object-related content, assumes the form of a motive that drives the individual to act. The motive is, in fact, the object of the need–the very reason for which the person acts. It is precisely the motive that gives activity its integrity, distinguishing it from other activities.

A carpenter producing a table for sale and, in another case, making an identical table as a gift for a friend is engaged in different activities. Similarly, a first-grade student who has just been "teaching" her dolls to read from a primer and then sits down to read the same primer herself in preparation for the next day's lesson is engaged in two different activities.

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Naturally, human activity may be driven by several motives simultaneously. In such cases, these motives form a complex system within which one becomes dominant. This leading motive confers a specific personal meaning on the activity, shaping the individual's relation to it.

However, a motive is rarely realized directly. Its realization typically requires the attainment of a series of intermediate results which, taken together under certain conditions, lead to its fulfillment. To earn money, for instance, the carpenter must acquire the necessary materials, prepare the components, assemble the table, and ultimately find a buyer.

Activity thus unfolds as a sequence of actions, each directed toward achieving an intermediate result that appears in consciousness as a goal. The attainment of these goals is linked to the realization of the underlying motive. Although goals are always generated by motives, they generally do not coincide with them.

This is evident from the fact that, depending on the conditions of activity, the same motive may require different sequences of actions–that is, the attainment of different goals. Conversely, the same sequence of actions may serve the realization of different motives.

This implies that goals are formulated by the individual through the analysis of the situation of action from the standpoint of the currently relevant motive.

The attainment of a goal always presents the individual with a task to be solved. According to Aleksei Leontiev, a task is a goal specified under concrete conditions of its achievement (LEONTIEV, 1978).

The success of solving such a task depends, on the one hand, on how fully both objective and subjective conditions are taken into account, and, on the other, on how meaningfully these conditions are analyzed and generalized in relation to the goal at hand.

These factors determine the mode of action–that is, the sequence of operations whose execution ensures (or fails to ensure) the attainment of the

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intended goal. Clearly, the same task may be solved in different ways, just as the same method (set of operations) may be used to solve different tasks.

Accordingly, three interrelated pairs of concepts can be distinguished: activity–motive, action–goal, and operation–task (LEONTIEV, 1978). While the first term in each pair designates a structural "unit" of activity, the second refers to the psychological mechanism responsible for its generation and regulation.

These mechanisms are inseparably interconnected, interpenetrating one another; yet they are neither identical in function, nor in content, nor in form.

Thus, the internal structure of activity is revealed as a system in which its levels and regulatory mechanisms are interconnected, ensuring its coherence and directedness.

The outlined conception of the structure of activity provides a robust explanation for the functioning and development of complex mental phenomena and processes. In fact, these ideas were originally developed precisely as a scientific instrument for the analysis and explanation of the psyche.

The productivity of this framework as an explanatory principle has been confirmed by its success in addressing such complex problems as the development of the psyche, the nature of consciousness, the psychological mechanisms of compensation for various impairments, as well as by the emergence of new approaches to the study of classical domains of psychology: memory (A. N. Leontiev, P. I. Zinchenko, A. A. Smirnov), thinking (Sergei Rubinstein, P. Ya. Galperin), and perception (A. V. Zaporozhets, V. P. Zinchenko) (LEONTIEV, 1978).

However, while the concept of activity proved highly effective for explaining the psyche, psychology for a long time did not actually study activity itself in its concrete forms. An exception, perhaps, was play, which was extensively investigated over many years by Daniil Elkonin. Yet these studies remained at the periphery of activity theory and did not exert a significant influence on its development.

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The situation changed substantially in the early 1960s, when systematic investigations began into such forms of activity as the work of operators in automated control systems and the learning activity of schoolchildren. Already the first steps in this direction revealed that psychological activity theory, as it had been developed in the schools of Aleksei Leontiev and Sergei Rubinstein, required significant refinement.

This applied first and foremost to the very concept of activity itself.

For the purpose of explaining the psyche, it was sufficient to understand activity as the "unit of life of a material subject," mediated by psychic reflection (LEONTIEV, 1978). If one takes into account that the notion of the subject in this context is used in an epistemological sense–that is, as a subject of reflection–it becomes clear that the concept of activity assumes an extremely broad meaning, applicable not only to humans but also to animals.

It was precisely in this broad sense that Aleksei Leontiev employed the concept in developing his theory of the evolution of the psyche.

Despite its undeniable strengths, such an approach does not correspond to the meaning of activity in the sources from which the concept was originally derived. In both classical German philosophy and in Marx, the concept of activity (as well as that of the subject) was applied exclusively to the human being, characterizing a qualitatively distinct mode of existence in the world.

Of course, both humans and animals can exist only through active interaction with the environment. However, the nature of this interaction differs fundamentally.

Animal activity is directed toward adaptation to the environment. It takes the form of responses to external stimuli signaling changes in vital conditions. These signals "trigger" corresponding behavioral mechanisms, unfolding as more or less complex chains of reflexes.

At their core are genetically fixed unconditioned reflexes (instincts), upon which conditioned reflexes are subsequently built. The latter, however, merely modify innate forms of behavior without overcoming their fundamental limitations.

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It should be emphasized that the genetically determined set of instincts defines only the potential possibilities of animal activity. Whether and to what extent these possibilities are realized depends on external conditions, which thus constitute the actual source of their activity.

Thus, the existence of animals is ensured by reflexive activity, whose possibilities are strictly limited, while the sources of this activity lie outside the animal itself.

Human activity is of a fundamentally different nature.

Certainly, as a living being, the human organism is to some extent compelled to adapt to existing conditions of life. However, such adaptive responses are manifested only at the physiological level–that is, they characterize not the activity of the person as such, but rather the functioning of their life-support systems.

As for human behavior proper, it is least of all characterized by instinctive-adaptive forms, for the simple reason that humans possess virtually no genetically predetermined system of behavioral instincts. It is likely that even our distant ancestors did not possess a sufficient set of such instincts, which ultimately led to the emergence of a fundamentally different, specifically human mode of interaction with the world.

Unlike animals, humans do not merely adapt to given conditions of existence; rather, they transform these conditions in accordance with their needs by producing the objects required for their satisfaction and the tools necessary for their production. In other words, human activity is not adaptive but productive and transformative in character.

By transforming nature, humans create a specific environment that corresponds to their needs, aspirations, and representations. It is precisely this type of activity that constitutes the mode of human existence as a subject.

In contrast to the adaptive activity of animals, human activity does not unfold as a response to external stimuli, but is generated by the individual themselves; it is therefore non-reflexive and free. Its possibilities are determined not by genetically fixed mechanisms, but by the level of development of culture,

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which serves as the real foundation of human transformative activity (VYGOTSKY, 1978).

The distinctive features of this cultural-historical type of activity are captured in the concept of activity. To live in the human sense is not merely to exist by adapting to circumstances, but to transform them through one's own activity.

It is hardly justified to extend this concept to animal activity. Such an extension creates the illusion of a "transition" from biological to cultural-historical forms of activity, whereas anthropogenesis is, in fact, a complex and prolonged process of overcoming biologically determined, reflex-based forms of behavior.

In this sense, the broad interpretation of the concept of activity represents a step backward in comparison with the position of Lev Vygotsky, who insisted on the irreducibility of higher mental functions, which have a cultural-historical nature, to the biological forms of animal psyche (VYGOTSKY, 1978).

Most importantly, such a generalization of the concept of activity can only be achieved at the cost of abandoning the understanding of the human being as a subject.

It is no coincidence that the concept of the subject came to occupy a secondary position in activity theory as developed in the school of Aleksei Leontiev (LEONTIEV, 1978). Considerably greater attention to this concept was given by Sergei Rubinstein, although in his work it was developed outside the framework of activity theory. (RUBINSTEIN, 2012).

Yet without taking into account the properties of the human being as a subject of activity, it is impossible to understand activity itself in its concrete forms.

Thus, the analysis of activity inevitably leads to the necessity of considering the human being as a subject; without this, the very category of activity loses its substantive meaning.

In light of this, let us briefly turn to the concept of the subject, which serves as one of the key starting points for the study of any form of activity and for addressing the problems of developmental learning

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II. The human being as a subject of activity

As has already been noted, the human being is characterized by a creative and transformative relation to the world. Precisely because the conditions of their existence, creating a humanized environment, nature becomes the object of their activity, while the human being acts as its subject.

The idea of a subject who creates the world emerged in ancient times and found its expression in the notion of the Creator underlying the world's major religious traditions.

It is therefore evident that the human being must possess specific qualities that make it possible to act as a subject of activity.

What, then, are these qualities?

Like the activity of any living organism, human activity is grounded in needs. However, it is important to take into account the qualitative specificity of human needs.

A need is an extremely generalized reflection of the conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of a living being. Some of these conditions are equally essential for both humans and animals (such as food, warmth, oxygen, etc.), and the corresponding vital needs are largely universal and genetically determined.

However, the necessary conditions of human life include not only natural factors, but also those created by human beings themselves–housing, means of transportation, culture, art, and so on. This implies that the needs for such products function not only as prerequisites of activity, but also as its results.

They arise, develop, and disappear not according to biological laws, but according to cultural-historical laws (Vygotsky, 1978).

One of the fundamental tendencies of human history consists precisely in the continuous expansion of the sphere of such sociogenic needs and in their enrichment with new object-related content (Repkin & Dusavitsky, 2021).

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It is evident that the configuration of such cultural-historical needs is not the same for all individuals. This means that the preconditions of their activity also differ.

Therefore, one of the most important "dimensions" of the human being as a subject of activity is the scope of their needs. The broader, more diverse, and more relevant these needs are, the more multifaceted human activity becomes.

Being, in Marx's terms, the "essential forces" of the human being, needs and abilities determine the individual's capacity to become a subject of a particular activity. However, for this possibility to be realized, a special mechanism is required–one that sets these "essential forces" into motion and regulates them.

Thus, the analysis of needs and abilities leads to the necessity of identifying the mechanisms that ensure the actual formation of the human being as a subject of activity.

A special role in this regard belongs to the specifically human need to realize oneself as a subject, which reflects not only the individual's need for certain conditions of life, but also for their active transformation. This need manifests itself already at early stages of development (the well-known "I myself!" of a two-year-old child) and is inherent in every human being. However, for each individual it is filled with a particular object-related content, occupies a different place within the hierarchy of needs, and reaches different levels of development, which decisively characterizes the individual as a subject.

If a need performs the function of a "trigger mechanism" of activity, then the possibility of its realization presupposes the presence of corresponding abilities, that is, a complex system of properties that determine the individual's capacity to use means and to master the methods and procedures of activity.

The question of abilities will be examined specifically in the context of the analysis of learning activity; therefore, at this point we shall limit ourselves to two general remarks.

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First, human abilities, like human needs, are products of cultural-historical development (Vygotsky, 1978); second, while constituting one of the preconditions of activity, they are themselves formed, transformed, and developed in the course of activity (Leontiev, 1978).

This implies that abilities differ among individuals. Since the composition of abilities and the level of their development determine both the possibility and the effectiveness of a given activity, they should be regarded as one of the most important characteristics of the human being as a subject.

Being, in Marx's terms, the "essential forces" of the human being, needs and abilities determine the individual's capacity to become a subject of a particular activity. However, for this possibility to be realized, a special mechanism is required–one that sets these "essential forces" into motion and regulates them.

Thus, the analysis of needs and abilities leads to the necessity of identifying the mechanisms that ensure the actual formation of the human being as a subject of activity.

However, such goal-directedness, insofar as it is reduced to the reproduction of past experience, contains nothing specifically human in terms of subjectivity.

A more complex situation arises when a goal is set for the individual from the outside (for example, in the process of instruction). In this case, it may be accepted if it corresponds to the individual's needs and experience. However, it is often the case that a person is required to achieve a result that is absent from their prior experience.

The fulfillment of such a requirement is possible only when it acquires a certain meaning for the individual, that is, when it is related to their experience and current needs. If the imposed requirement lacks such meaning, it is rejected. Even when accepted, however, it is inevitably reinterpreted, and therefore the actual goal guiding the individual almost never coincides with the one externally assigned.

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The ability to act in accordance with a given goal significantly expands the scope of human activity. However, in itself it does not yet characterize the human being as a subject who transforms the world. It ensures the reproduction and variable application of existing experience, but not a movement beyond its limits. Such a type of activity is also possible for technical systems, which are capable of acting in accordance with a given goal, modifying it in light of conditions and prior experience.

Activity acquires a fundamentally different character in a situation where none of the possible (anticipated or externally proposed) outcomes satisfies the individual.

For an animal, such a situation proves to be a dead end: it leads either to the cessation of activity or to chaotic trial-and-error behavior. A human being, however, can act differently. How exactly depends on the meaning that the situation acquires for them, which, in turn, is determined by the nature of the knowledge upon which their consciousness relies.

Knowledge–that is, elements of human experience that have been generalized in a certain way and fixed in one form or another–can be characterized from different perspectives. They may be considered, for example, with respect to the domain they reflect, their degree of reliability, their source, their form of fixation, and their relation to consciousness.

One of the most essential characteristics of knowledge is its contentfulness, determined by which aspect of experience it reflects. From this standpoint, it is important to distinguish between knowledge in which the resultative aspect of experience is fixed and generalized according to its external manifestations–its "features"–and knowledge that reflects the objective foundations of that experience, that is, knowledge that generalizes the internal properties and relations of the object, which determine the features of its functioning and the possible ways of its transformation (DAVYDOV, 1996).

Knowledge of the first type (which may be either everyday or scientific), when consciously apprehended and fixed in the form of separate norms and rules, serves as an instrument of the intellect (rassudok), which constructs a relatively

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static picture of the world in consciousness. Each of its elements, linked to specific needs and interests, acquires a stable meaning, to which correspond fixed goals and methods of their attainment.

The rigid operational-semantic scheme of past experience that arises from this work of the intellect ensures confident behavior in standard situations. However, this same scheme significantly limits the possibilities of action in non-standard situations, which are either mistakenly identified with already known situations (leading to erroneous decisions) or evaluated as contradicting "common sense."

In the latter case, a person may refuse to act, even if strongly motivated. Of course, in such a situation, a human being–unlike an animal–remains capable of acting in accordance with external demands. However, deprived of personal meaning, these demands do not function as goals that motivate action, but merely as external guidelines.

As a result, action loses its integrity and disintegrates into a sequence of operations. If the outcome proves to be objectively useful and receives positive social evaluation, it may acquire subjective meaning for the individual. In this way, the operational-semantic scheme expands (Repkin, 2019).

Another source of its expansion is the reinterpretation of the actual results of actions directed toward the attainment of already familiar goals.

Thus, relying on the intellect (rassudok), a person can set only such goals as anticipate results already known from past experience and that possess a relatively narrow, fixed meaning. Characteristically, such goals are represented in consciousness in the form of a concrete image of the result.

It is quite evident that the ability to set such goals, while being an important quality of the human being as a performer, characterizes them to the least extent as a creative subject.

Fundamentally different possibilities for the organization of action are opened by consciousness grounded in knowledge that not only fixes the resultative aspect of human experience but also generalizes its objective foundations–that is, the system of properties and relations of the object that

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determine the features of its functioning and the possibilities of its transformation and development (Davydov, 1996).

The most typical example of such knowledge is theoretical concepts. However, they also exist outside the sphere of scientific cognition (for example, in artistic images).

Relying on such knowledge, a person comes to understand each of the states of an object established in experience not as the only possible one, but as one among many possible states. At the same time, different states of the object–sometimes externally very distant from one another–are perceived as interconnected and capable of transforming into one another.

Knowledge of this type constitutes the most important instrument of human reason, whose primary function is not the registration and systematization of facts (as is the case with the intellect, rassudok), but the establishment of their internal connections and interdependence (Davydov, 1996).

The rational picture of the world differs fundamentally from the one constructed by the intellect (rassudok). It is not a set of classified elements, but an integral system of interconnected "units," each of which is itself a dynamic, developing system.

A characteristic feature of such a picture of the world is its openness. Its expansion does not occur through the mechanical addition of new elements, but through the deepening and differentiation of existing "units," as well as through their inclusion in new connections as new properties and relations of objects and phenomena are revealed.

As a result, each such "unit" becomes connected with an entire cluster of human needs and interests, acquiring a multidimensional meaning that corresponds to a multiplicity of goals and ways of achieving them.

The operational-semantic field of consciousness that is formed in this way becomes the most important mechanism for regulating rational human behavior.

In standard situations, a person acts here in much the same way as within the framework of the intellectual (rassudok) scheme, relying on familiar goals and methods of action. However, the specificity of this

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mechanism manifests itself in non-standard situations, when habitual goals or methods of action cease to satisfy the individual.

If, for the intellect (rassudok), such a situation constitutes a dead end, for reason it becomes an indicator of its own limitations, a sign of an insufficient understanding of the essential properties and relations of the object.

It is precisely this circumstance that actualizes in the individual the need to realize oneself as a subject, which manifests itself in an acutely experienced feeling of dissatisfaction with oneself.

This motive, in turn, impels the individual to search for new possibilities of action, grounded in a deeper understanding of the object, which requires a preliminary representation of the result of such action.

Such a representation is not merely an image of a future object–in it, the potential capacities of the human being themselves are objectified. For this reason, it acquires a profound personal meaning and functions as a powerful motivating force.

Thus, in human consciousness there emerges a fundamentally new goal–one that leads beyond the limits of past experience and the given reality.

Such a goal, of course, does not arise immediately in a completed form–as a concrete and detailed image of the result. Rather, it takes the form of a hypothetical sketch, which is clarified and specified in the course of action (as Aleksei Leontiev noted, “the goal is tested through action”) (Leontiev, 1978).

Nevertheless, it is precisely the setting of such a goal that constitutes the starting point of any creative, transformative act of activity, anticipating its result in the most general form.

The recognition of the decisive role of this ideal stage of creative activity has found a figurative expression in one of the oldest monuments of culture:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… All things were made through Him…” (John 1:1–3).

If we take into account that the Greek Logos is not merely a word, but Word-as-Law, Word-as-Idea, the profound meaning of this, at first glance, poetic metaphor becomes clear.

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It is precisely the human capacity to set goals that do not merely reproduce elements of past experience but transcend its limits that characterizes the individual as a subject who creates and transforms the world "in one's own image and likeness."

Since this capacity is grounded in reason, it is reason that serves as the principal component–the core of the mechanism regulating the subject's creative activity (Davydov, 1996). It is reason, rather than needs and abilities taken in themselves, that constitutes the real precondition of human transformative activity and the most essential property characterizing the individual as a subject.

It is no coincidence that this property has been established in the very generic name of the human being–Homo sapiens.

However, no matter how great the role of reason may be, it alone cannot ensure the reliable regulation of activity. The very act of setting a fundamentally new goal places the individual before a choice: to follow a familiar and experience-based norm of behavior, or to go beyond it, acting against "common sense."

Making such a choice requires not only reason, but also a special quality–will.

Will is usually associated with the stage of carrying out an activity. Indeed, no undertaking can be brought to completion without the ability to overcome obstacles. However, in creative activity, what becomes decisive is not the strength of will, but its freedom.

When speaking of freedom, one usually refers to the external possibility of acting in accordance with one's convictions. Such freedom is important, but it is not the decisive condition of creativity.

Far more essential is inner freedom–the capacity to make decisions grounded in understanding. This means that free will relies upon reason: the deeper a person understands what is happening, the greater the basis they have for a conscious choice of goals, means, and methods of their realization.

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Conversely, the limitation of understanding deprives the individual of the possibility of choice, placing them in dependence on circumstances, habits, and even fleeting moods. In such a case, there can be no question of creativity.

Only a human being endowed with free will–that is, a will grounded in reason–can be a subject of creativity.

The connection between creativity and inner freedom has been profoundly reflected in art. One may recall the lines of Alexander Pushkin:

Follow the free path,

Go where your free mind leads you…

Freedom is not only freedom from something, but also freedom for the sake of something. Through their activity, a person affirms themselves in the world, transforming it "in their own image and likeness."

This highest meaning of human life is at once the source of freedom and its inner limit.

A person is internally free only insofar as their highest value becomes the human being themselves–as a representative of the human species. Yet one can become aware of oneself in this capacity only through one's relation to other people.

The experience of such a relation is formed in the course of shared life. By empathizing with others, a person learns to share joy and sorrow, to be both compassionate and just, tolerant and open to the individuality of another.

This entire complex of experiences, synthesized in the feeling of love, opens before the human being the world as a highest spiritual value that gives meaning to their existence.

Love is precisely the source of that inner force which makes a person free from transient circumstances and enables them to transform these circumstances.

It is no coincidence that the commandment of love occupies a central place in moral teaching:

"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

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Being the source of freedom, love simultaneously constitutes its limit. One cannot be free without recognizing the freedom of another. To love a person means to unconditionally acknowledge their dignity and their right to be free.

The freedom of one ends where the freedom of another begins.

A person deprived of love inevitably becomes a prisoner of their own passions.

World literature has repeatedly addressed this tragedy. One may recall, for instance, Aleko in the works of Alexander Pushkin:

Like a carefree bird,
He too, a wandering exile,
Knew no secure home
And grew accustomed to nothing…
But, oh God, how passions played
With his tormented soul!

The tragic outcome of this "play of passions" is well known, as is the remarkably precise diagnosis placed by the poet in the mouth of the old gypsy:

You were not born for a wild fate;
You seek freedom only for yourself…

There is no such thing as freedom "for oneself alone."

Love is the concentrated expression of the moral laws that underlie human life. By violating them, a person deprives themselves of inner freedom and, consequently, of the possibility of being a subject of free creative activity.

"Genius and villainy are two incompatible things"–in this aphorism, Alexander Pushkin captured with utmost precision the inner connection between free creativity and its only source–morality, that is, love for the human being.

From this perspective, the well-known statement by Albert Einstein does not appear paradoxical–that the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky gave him more as a scientist than the works of physicists.

As a necessary condition of creativity, freedom also imposes the greatest responsibility upon the individual.

This responsibility concerns not only the results of actions. Responsibility for creative activity has a special character.

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A person who follows prescribed rules may, in the event of failure, refer to the one who indicated the wrong path. But the one who has chosen their own path is deprived of such a possibility.

Creativity presupposes responsibility not only for the result, but also for the choice itself–for the intention.

The only judge here can be the subject themselves. The only code is the law of morality.

However, in order to carry out such judgment, the subject must, as it were, divide into two: into the creator and the judge.

This "alter ego" of the subject–their conscience–is precisely that highest instance before which they bear responsibility for their choice.

It becomes the source of profound doubt and reflection.

As Alexander Pushkin so beautifully expressed:

You are your own highest judge;

You alone can assess your work most strictly.

Are you satisfied with it, demanding artist?

3.Conclusions

Reason, which enables a person to transcend the limits of immediate reality and set new goals; free will, grounded in the feeling of love and human dignity; and conscience, which correlates goals and means with moral foundations–these are the principal components of the mechanism that regulates human creative activity.

At the same time, this constitutes the necessary minimum of qualities that a person must possess in order to act as a subject of activity.

This mechanism is not given to the individual from the outset, but is formed in the course of life. These qualities are manifested to different degrees in different individuals.

This means that a person does not always act as a subject.

There are many situations that do not require creativity, but rather presuppose adherence to norms and rules.

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In this regard, it is useful to distinguish between two types of activity:

- activity (creative, subject-based)
- role behavior

Role behavior is associated with the performance of socially prescribed norms (teacher, student, parent, etc.).

However, these forms of activity are not rigidly opposed. They are genetically related: role behavior is historically derived from creative activity.

Any form of activity becomes fixed in social experience, becomes institutionalized, and may function as an external force in relation to the individual.

In such a case, activity "takes hold" of the person, turning them into a performer (Georgy Shchedrovitsky).

However, another path is also possible: the individual masters activity by appropriating its internal structures–motives, goals, and methods of action.

In this case, activity becomes a form of the individual's own free life.

Thus, the distinction between these forms of activity is of fundamental importance for understanding the development of the human being as a subject.

El ser humano como sujeto de la actividad

RESUMEN
El artículo analiza el concepto de actividad como categoría fundamental de la psicología, que permite repensar la naturaleza del ser humano como sujeto. Se demuestra que la actividad, en su sentido propiamente humano, no tiene un carácter adaptativo, sino productivo-transformador, constituyendo el modo de existencia del hombre en el mundo. A partir del enfoque histórico-cultural y de la teoría de la actividad, se fundamentan las características esenciales de la actividad humana, evidenciando su diferencia cualitativa respecto de las formas biológicas de actividad. Se presta especial atención a la estructura de la actividad (motivo – objetivo – acción – operación) y al papel de la conciencia como mecanismo de su regulación. Se argumenta que el factor decisivo en la formación del ser humano como sujeto de la actividad es su capacidad de trascender los límites de la experiencia previa y establecer nuevos objetivos, fundamentados en el pensamiento teórico. En este contexto, se analizan diferentes tipos de conocimiento y su influencia en el carácter de la actividad. Se sostiene que los componentes centrales del mecanismo de la actividad creadora son el pensamiento, la voluntad libre y la conciencia moral, estrechamente vinculados a los fundamentos éticos de la existencia humana. Se destaca el papel del amor como condición de la libertad interna del sujeto. Se concluye con la distinción entre la actividad como forma de acción creadora y el comportamiento de rol como reproducción de normas sociales, lo cual resulta fundamental para la comprensión del desarrollo humano.

Palabras clave: Actividad. Sujeto. Conciencia. Pensamiento teórico. Libertad.

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