

## Activity Theory: quest for the unattainable and hope for the future

This paper addresses current problems of theoretical psychology focusing on future perspectives of the Activity Theory (AT). AT (Leontiev, etc.) is the most internationally known development of Russian psychology. AT is rooted in a long European philosophical tradition (going back to Aristotle's understanding of the freely moving animal in its ecology), and is continued in international science, most known being the Scandinavian AT, developing in Finland and Denmark.

This paper was written in reference to commentaries on the previous joint paper (Mammen and Mironenko, 2015), which focused on the Russian and Danish ATs potential for further evolution, and brought to the light a new theoretical development (the theory of two types of categories) by Jens Mammen. The commentaries revealed the need to introduce behindhand certain clarifications in concern to the author's view on general landmarks and objectives in the development of psychological science, in respect to which activity theory (AT) can be assessed and evaluated.

Author's position is highlighted in reference to three issues, open to question in the contemporary theoretical discourse:

Whether psychology is and should be *a real science*, in the sense of claims to scientific method;  
Paradigm status of psychological science;  
The "methodological crisis" of psychology.

It is argued that:

Psychology is a necessary and an essential part of the Science in general. It should keep on trying to be scientific (i.e., logical and deterministic), at the same time trying to comprehend the subjectivity of psychic phenomena. No science is perfect, ideally logical and deterministic, all sciences deal with relative truths, gradually, step by step, approaching the unattainable ideal. Scientific criteria should be applied to the direction and the method of search, rather than to the products.

Psychology is a multiparadigmatic science. The very idea of an "all in one solution" for psychological science as truly reductionist, but, luckily, unrealizable. It is like the idea to get rid of the multiplicity of human languages by constructing some sort of an artificial language. The true way to integration leads through dialogue and efforts for mutual understanding.

With regard to the much-discussed "crisis" of psychology, the author asserts that the crisis is *not* uninterrupted and continuous, covering more than a century of our science development. It is rather a chain of crises, and it was not until 1980s that the first signs of the contemporary crisis

appeared.

The author grounds on the assumption that contemporary psychological science is developing along the path of integration, as part of the emerging global world. AT can contribute to the development of emerging multi-paradigmatic system of the global psychological science because it combines two aspirations, which are rarely combined in psychological theories: a) consistent focus on scientific method, objectivity and conclusiveness; b) the pursuit of a holistic and complete, not simplified and not one-sided comprehension of the subject. The former provides good bases for dialogue with “objective” psychological approaches, close to natural sciences. The latter is suggesting dialogue with teleological humanitarian psychologies. Therefore, AT can engage in networking with a wide range of theories, facilitating the integration of psychological knowledge. It can contribute to resolve the much-discussed collision of reductionist “scientific” theoretical models and loose “comprehensive” descriptions in contemporary psychological science. Developing dialogue and cooperation with other schools is of special importance for the Russian AT, which after decades of development in relative isolation should regain its place in the international science, where it was rooted, overcoming the language and conceptual barriers. Some new considerations are suggested regarding the theory of two types of categories of Jens Mammen, formulated in the paper (Mammen and Mironenko, 2015).

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## **Publication**

[Activity Theory: Quest for the Unattainable and Hope for the Future \(Reply to Commentaries\).](#)

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*Integr Psychol Behav Sci. 2016 Sep*