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Activating Postmodernism ¹

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between postmodernism and activity theory. Specifically, it is argued that a synthesis of postmodern psychology and activity theory can be effected such that a) activity theory is transformed from a progressive, albeit modernist, theory into a postmodern praxis for empowering people; and b) postmodern psychology is made more radical and more rigorous and, thereby, less vulnerable to critiques from both left and right. Marx, Vygotsky and Wittgenstein are discussed for ways in which they have informed the synthesized methodology that is put forth. Key concepts found in activity theoretic writings are discussed throughout the article: dialectics as method, being/becoming, development/revolutionary activity and performance. The article concludes with an invitation to postmodern psychology to strengthen its critique of psychology's philosophical biases through transforming itself *activistically*.

Key Words

Marx, Vygotsky, Wittgenstein, activity theory, postmodern psychology, social therapy

As socially based critical theories, both activity theory and postmodern psychology have evolved critiques of mainstream psychology's core conceptions and put forth alternative conceptions and practices, which have at their core the understanding of human beings as social and cultural (and, to a lesser extent, as historical). Some of these alternatives expose the philosophical biases underlying many of psychology's core conceptions. Some engage ordinary people in new ways of relating to themselves and others. The perspective of this article is that both the exposing and the engaging need to occur simultaneously if psychology is to become useful in empowering people to contemplate and effect creative approaches to social change. This perspective is informed by my work engaging issues of subjectivity in educational and therapeutic environments, as a development psychologist and collaborator/analyst of Newman's social therapeutic methodology (Holzman, 1997; Holzman, 1999; Holzman, 2000; Holzman and Mendez, 2003).

Because postmodern thought, especially as applied to psychology, is familiar to philosophical and theoretical psychologists (including readers of this journal), neither an overview of its basic tenets nor a list of major players and their positions seems necessary. Throughout this article, postmodernism and postmodern psychology refer broadly to a) what is taken to be the qualitatively different historical period in which we are now living—one marked by the fragmentation of subjectivity, the breakdown of grand narratives and the destruction of meaning, and b) articulations of the human realm as multiple, blurred (or boundary-less), socially constructed, relational rather than individualistic, local rather than universal, and narrative as opposed to truth-based. Although I identify as a postmodern psychologist, I share with others (e.g., Morss, 2000;

Parker, 1998, 2000) a concern that postmodernism could become another rationale for the status quo or, worse, a breeding ground for reactionary ideas unless it becomes radicalized. The radicalization proposed here has postmodern psychology fused with the practice of dialectics as method, rooted in the dialectic of being/becoming, oriented toward development (people developing through revolutionary activity), and performatory. Each of these concepts—dialectics as method, being/becoming, development/revolutionary activity and performance—it will be shown, can be found in seminal articulations of activity theory.

The conceptual frameworks of Karl Marx, Lev Vygotsky and Ludwig Wittgenstein can articulate a relationship between activity theory and postmodernism that keeps postmodern psychology progressive and emancipatory. The writings of these three thinkers are especially helpful in the effort to activate (more precisely—but awkwardly—“activity-ate”) postmodernism. To foreshadow the substance of this article, I will summarize the influence of each of them in turn.

It is as methodologist (more than as political economist) that Marx has relevance to activity theorists and postmodernists, especially their challenges to mainstream psychology’s dualistic separation of person and environment. In his early writings (for example, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology*) Marx put forth a radically social humanism: human beings are first and foremost social beings. He posited that both human activity and human mind are social, not just in their origins but in their content. For Marx, the transformation of the world and of ourselves as human beings is one and the same task, and it is this capacity for what he termed *revolutionary activity* that makes individual and species development possible. ²

Vygotsky brought Marx's sociological insights to bear on the practical question of how human beings learn and develop. He departed from traditional psychology's understanding of development as an individual accomplishment and instead viewed development as a *socio-cultural activity*. His writings on cognitive development in early childhood (e.g., Vygotsky, 1987) have turned out to have increasing relevance to cognitive, social and emotional development at all ages and in numerous settings. Vygotsky can be seen as a forerunner to a new *psychology of becoming*, in which people experience the social nature of their existence and the power of collective creative activity in the process of making new tools for growth.

Ludwig Wittgenstein challenged the foundations of philosophy, psychology and linguistics. His was a radically new method of doing philosophy—without foundations, theses, premises, generalizations or abstractions. His exposure of the “pathology” embedded in language and in accepted conceptions of language, thoughts and emotions, and ways that a belief in deeper meanings and internal mental processes holds us captive has been noted by modernists and postmodernists alike (for example, Baker, 1992; Bakhurst, 1995, Shotter, 1993a and b, 1995). As his method was a kind of therapy for philosophers (Baker, 1992), one can view postmodern therapies that focus on language (e.g., narrative, constructionist, collaborative and social therapies) as methods to help ordinary people break free from versions of philosophical pathologies that permeate everyday life so as to be makers of meaning and not simply users of language.

Marx and Activity

There are different stories of where activity theory originated just as there are different versions of activity theory at play among psychologists, educational researchers and others. Presentation of such history is beyond the scope of this discussion (but see Repkin, 2003; Robbins and Stetsenko, 2001; Wertsch, 1981). What is relevant to the topic at hand is the lineage that we can trace back to Marx. For surely one line of thought in his writings is that concerning *activity*. For Marx, activity gives expression to the dialectical and revolutionary character of human life, as in 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*. (Marx, 1974, p. 121).

This dialectical and revolutionary conception of activity is expanded upon in the following quotation from Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

We have seen how, on the assumption that private property has been positively superceded, man produces man, himself and then other men; how the object which is the direct activity of his personality is at the same time his existence for other men and their existence for him. Similarly, the material of labor and man himself as a subject are the starting point as well as the result of this movement (and because there must be this starting point private property is an historical necessity). Therefore, the *social*

character is the universal character of the whole movement; *as* society itself produces *man as man*, so it is *produced* by him. Activity and mind are social in their content as well as in their *origin*; they are *social* activity and *social* mind. (Marx, 1967, p. 129)

Thus, for Marx activity (or revolutionary, practical-critical activity) is fundamentally social, communal and reconstructive—human beings exercising their power as *social activity-ists*. We might call it an assertion of a kind of radical social-cultural-historical humanism (not to be confused with the humanist tradition that glorifies individualism), while Marx called it communism: “*Communism* is the *positive* abolition of *private property*, of *human self-alienation*, and thus the real *appropriation* of *human nature* through and for man. It is, therefore, the return of man himself as a *social*, i.e., really human, being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development” (Marx, 1967, p. 127).

Relating to people and helping them to relate to themselves and each other as revolutionaries (social activity-ists) entails relating to them as world historic in everyday, mundane matters, that is, as social beings engaged in the life/history-making process of always *becoming* (assimilating, in Marx’s terms, “all the wealth of previous development”). Here is where Vygotsky comes in.

Dialectics as Method

First, Vygotsky provided a new and helpful articulation of dialectics as method, as he brought Marx's philosophical conceptions to bear on the practical questions of how it is that human beings learn and develop.³ Vygotsky recognized that a new ontological unit—activity—necessitated a new conception of method: "The search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 65).

Here Vygotsky breaks with the accepted scientific paradigm, in which method is understood as a tool that, when applied, yields results. With this model, the relation between tool and result is linear, instrumental and dualistic (tool for result). Vygotsky is proposing a non-linear, non-instrumental, non-dualistic method— a dialectical method—in which the “tool” and the “result” come into existence together. They are neither separate nor identical, but elements of a unity (totality, whole). Vygotsky is relating to the totality, not to any particular. His great insight was that human development—on the individual, societal and species levels—is the transformation of totalities, not the changing of so-called individual particulars.

This conception of method as the tool and the result cannot be separated from Vygotsky's conception of what it means to be human. Among the many wonderful and terrible things we are and do, human beings have the capacity to “do dialectics.” We transform totalities; we create “tools-and-results.” Vygotsky understood the human developmental process dialectically, as an ongoing, continuously emergent social-cultural-historical collective activity. In contemporary language, we human beings create

our development; it doesn't happen to us. The evidence? Our capacity for dialectics: from infancy through old age we are "who we are" and, at the very same time, "who we are not."

Tool and result points the way out of the objective-subjective and theory-practice dichotomies that have plagued both Marxism and psychology for decades. Harkening back to Marx ("The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*," quoted above), it puts human beings in the role of changers of their environments (which include themselves), changers who are inseparable from the change they effect (which includes their changed selves). It suggests that what is necessary for the growth of individuals, societies, cultures and civilizations is not merely the use of already existing tools, but the creation of new kinds of tools, that is, ones that are simultaneously tool-and-result.

The Zone of Proximal Development as Life Space

A further contribution to a revolutionary (social activity-ist) understanding of activity comes from Vygotsky's conception of the *zone of proximal development (zpd)*, the difference between what one can do "with others" and what one can do "by oneself:"

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This

applies equally to all voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher mental functions originate as actual relations between people. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

Thus, the person, the mind, development, learning, psychological processes such as thinking, speaking, remembering, problem solving, and so on, are created or produced through participation in and internalization of social-cultural-historical forms of activity. Vygotsky was neither the first nor the last to notice that children (and adults) can "do more" in collaboration with others. But it was he who specified the social-cultural-historical process by which this occurs.

While often understood as essentially an interactionist scaffolding process that aids in enculturation (for example, Bodrova and Leong, 1996; Rogoff, 1984; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988; Wood and Attfield, 1996), a more radical interpretation of the zpd is that it is expressive of the dialectic of human life—that we are always who we are and simultaneously who we are becoming. For Vygotsky, the dialectic being/becoming was critical to early childhood. He noted that the critical factor in human relationships is how we relate to little children as ahead of themselves (that is, as who they are and who they are becoming) and it is by virtue of the employment of this creative methodology in every day life that human learning and development occur. Learning, then, is both the source and the product of development, just as development is both the source and the product of learning. As activity, learning and development are inseparably intertwined and emergent, best understood together as a whole (unity). Their relationship is

dialectical, not linear or temporal (one doesn't come before the other) or causal (one isn't the cause of the other).

Viewed from a postmodern perspective, the zpd does away with modernist dualism that insists on distinctions such as individual and society, inner and outer, subjective and objective, and suggests a new way of looking at what human beings do. First, the zpd suggests that people do not "come to know the world," nor do they "act upon it" or "construct" it, for such statements subtextually embody a separation of human beings and the world, resulting in the necessity of employing an abstract explanatory mode in order to understand how "in the world" an individual develops. Second, seeing the zpd as the life space in which and how we all live—inseparable from the we who produce it—frees us from seeking causal connection (a tendency, as Wittgenstein suggested, that stems from our preoccupation with the method of science, Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 17-18). From a social activity-ist perspective, the zpd is the socially-historically-culturally produced environment in which and how human beings organize and reorganize their relationships to each other and to nature. It is where and how human beings—determined, to be sure, by sometimes empirically observable circumstances—totally transform these very circumstances, creating something new. The zpd, then, is simultaneously the production of revolutionary activity and the environment that makes revolutionary activity possible (Newman and Holzman, 1993).

People grow as social units, not individually. Groupings of people construct “zones”—the spaces between who they are and who they are becoming—that allow them *to become*. From this perspective, the zpd is the ever emergent and continuously changing “distance” between being and becoming. In constructing zpd's people do things

they do not yet know how to do; they go beyond themselves. This capacity of people to do things in advance of themselves, Vygotsky discovered, *is* human development. Children learn and develop, he said, by “performing a head taller than they are” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102).

The zpd, then, can be understood as a rejection of the individuated learning and development model that dominates modernist psychology. More than deconstruction, however, it offers a positive alternative reconstruction—it suggests that groupings of people engage in the ensemble, dialectical, *performatory* activity of developing. In this way, Vygotsky’s zpd transforms stage theory—the idea that individuals (à la Piaget and Freud) go through a linear, teleological progression. *Stages FOR development* seems a more apt—and relevantly postmodern—characterization of human development than *stages OF development* (Holzman, 1997).

Speaking as Completion

Vygotsky’s views on the relationship between thinking and speaking contribute fresh insights to debates, particularly among postmodernists, on this and related matters. Essentially, Vygotsky deconstructed the centuries-old dualism between thought and word. In so doing, he provided a way to reject not only the pictorial but also the pragmatic view of language. His position can be seen in the following remarks:

The relationship of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a movement from thought to word and from word to thought ... Thought is

not expressed but completed in the word. We can, therefore, speak of the establishment (i.e., the unity of being and nonbeing) of thought in the word. Any thought strives to unify, to establish a relationship between one thing and another. Any thought has movement. It unfolds. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 250)

The structure of speech is not simply the mirror image of the structure of thought. It cannot, therefore, be placed on thought like clothes off a rack. Speech does not merely serve as the expression of developed thought. Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word. Therefore, precisely because of the contrasting directions of movement, the development of the internal and external aspects of speech forms a true unity. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 251)

There are not two separate worlds, the private one of thinking and the social one of speaking. There is, instead, the dialectical unity, speaking/thinking. Children would not be able to perform as speakers and, thereby, learn to speak, if thinking/speaking were not a *completive social activity*. Vygotsky provided the basis for a non-dualistic and non-expressionist relational conception of language.

Turning now to Wittgenstein, from the Marxian and Vygotskian activity-theoretic position I have been outlining, his writings make an important contribution. For Vygotsky's *language completing thought* ("thought completed in the word") presents an alternative to the dominant Western philosophical-linguistic-psychological paradigm

which rests on the assumption that language expresses thought. Vygotsky is not reversing the order of their relationship; he is rejecting the bifurcated interactionist view of language and thought and, thereby, doing away with the necessity of "reconnecting" them, that is, he rejects the overdetermined and overdetermining conception that language denotes, names, represents and expresses. Language completing thought identifies language as socio-cultural relational activity.

This view is supported by Wittgenstein's later writings, noted by many to have a more clinical, therapeutic and educational bent than an analytic one (Baker, 1992; Baker and Hacker, 1980; Newman and Holzman, 1996; Peterman, 1992; Shotter, 1993a and b; van der Merwe and Voestermans, 1995). To Wittgenstein, the way in which people (he was primarily speaking of philosophers) speak and think about speaking, thinking and other so-called mental processes obscures the activity of language. He points to the obstacles that stand in the way of carrying out the type of investigation necessary for seeing and showing language as activity—for example, he says that "our craving for generality,...the resultant of a number of tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusions" (1965, p.17) leads philosophers into metaphysical traps.

Wittgenstein identifies several other obstacles, including: the tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term; the tendency to assume that in order to understand a general term one must possess a kind of general picture (as opposed to pictures of particulars); the tendency to confuse two meanings/uses of "mental state"--a state of consciousness and a state of hypothetical mental mechanism; and the tendency to be preoccupied with the method of science (1965, pp. 17-18). The first three, according to Wittgenstein, reflect the philosophical

search for essences from above, outside, extra or beyond, while the last is indicative of how philosophy has been influenced by modern science's search for essences from inside or below--that is, its reductionism.

Language-games can clear away the confusion: "When we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent" (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 17). Playing language-games "bring[s] into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1953, para. 23).

This suggests that the common equation of meaning and use attributed to Wittgenstein might be ill advised and better replaced with a more Vygotskian interpretation. Meaning is created, Vygotsky has shown, through the activity of speaking completing thinking. If thinking-speaking is a continuous process of completing, then the "completer" need not be the same person who is doing the thinking. *Others can complete for us*. When people speak, participate in a dialogue, discussion or conversation (or write), they are not simply *saying* what is going on but are *creating* what is going on. And they understand each other by virtue of engaging in this shared creative activity, a process akin to discovering a method of relating to talk relationally rather than individualistically—in Wittgenstein's terms, as "activity, or a form of life;" in Vygotsky's terms, "completively" not expressively.

Actualizing Critique

In the ways just articulated, the works of Marx, Vygotsky and Wittgenstein dissolve the dualist gap between self and world, between thought and language, between who we are and who we are becoming, between theory and practice, in such a way that we can approach human beings as activists and activity-ists, not as knowers and perceivers. Further, we can now actualize the postmodern critique of modernist psychology's isolated individual through a new ontology—group activity. As a process ontology, a social-relational ontology, group activity raises a new set of questions and challenges for activity theorists and postmodernists alike. For the unit of study becomes the group (the relationship) creating itself—following Wittgenstein's (1953) critical commentary on private languages, it is the tool and result activity of reconstructing Marx's species identity and creating Vygotsky's social-cultural zpd.

This shift in focus from the individual to the relationship or group exposes a problematic assumption of psychology: if the entity that perceives, reads, problem solves, experiences emotional distress or disorder, and so on, is the individual, then the instruction, learning, teaching, treatment or therapy must be individuated. Accepting this assumption effectively rules out any methodological basis for the unit of instruction or therapeutic help being a social one. While group work in general and group therapy in particular might at first appear to be counter examples, typically the group is understood to be a context for individuals to learn and/or get help. The process ontology of group activity suggests, however, that individuals need to be organized as social units in order to carry out the tasks of learning and developing, not unlike countless other human endeavors in which people become organized as social units to get a specific job done.

(Manufacturing, most team sports, theatrical and other performance activities—not to mention the military—come immediately to mind as examples.)

An important issue emerging from this shift is how to focus on the group activity without subjugating the individual. Can we really concern ourselves with the collective activity of groups of people continuously creating new social units (for example, learning groups in classroom settings, therapy groups, performance ensembles) and not do disservice to the individuals that comprise those units? I think that we can. My optimism derives from my experience in developing a methodology, social therapeutics, in which this is the explicit goal, as well as my reading of recent literature on collaborative learning and collaborative therapies (Anderson, 1997; Paré and Larner, 2004; Strong and Paré, 2004). Focusing on how the group is performing its activity does not preclude seeing individuals; one can see and relate to both simultaneously.

All of the above will, perhaps, suggest areas for activity theorists to pursue, as the concepts I have discussed are embedded within its lineage. More to the point of this article, however, is the opportunity provided to postmodernists. In conclusion, I will briefly outline three directions postmodern psychology might take in an effort to transform itself activistically. I will occasionally refer to social therapeutic methodology as the source of some of my suggested directions.

Alienation. The alienation that Marx (1974) describes—relating to the products of production severed from their producers and from the process of their production, that is, as commodities—is not limited to cars, loaves of bread and computers, not even for Marx.⁴ It is, rather, the normal way of seeing and relating to everything in contemporary Western culture. People relate to their lives, their relationships, their feelings, their

culture, and so on, as things, torn away from the process of their creation and from their creators. While such “thingification” is a major factor in people’s emotional problems, therapies vary widely in the extent to which they engage alienation in practice, and almost none speak about it theoretically or methodologically.

If, following Marx, we are commodified and alienated individuals, then transformative social change would entail the de-commodification and de-alienation of the “human products”—a positive and constructive process of producing sociality. Vygotsky’s social-cultural psychology, a psychology of being and becoming, can be employed (as it has in social therapy) to de-commodify and de-alienate, through a deconstruction-reconstruction of the ontology of modernist psychology in which human beings are understood to be only who we are. In social therapy’s process ontology, human beings are both who we are and who we are becoming. And who we are becoming are creators of tools that can continuously transform mundane specific life practices (including those that produce alienation) into new forms of life. Creating these new kinds of tools is the *becoming activity* of creating/giving expression to our sociality.

Performance. Until recently, performance (as in theatrical performance) has not been vigorously pursued within activity theory and socio-cultural psychology, despite Vygotsky’s discovery of the necessary role that it plays in children’s learning and development (see Keith Sawyer’s recent body of work, 1997, 2001, 2003, for a welcome exception). Within psychology as a whole, the human capacity to perform, to pretend and to play has been undervalued and understudied. Within traditional psychotherapeutic work performance is best known as a tool for result (an instrument for interpretation or insight). The general idea behind psychodrama and drama therapy, for example, is that by

“acting out” instead of “talking about” their lives, people will reveal things that they otherwise cannot or will not. Others use drama techniques to encourage interpersonal relationships and group values as a way for people to learn how to express their problems with the group or a group member.

Recent developments within postmodern psychotherapy, however, relate to performance in a more tool and result fashion. Social constructionists highlight the performatory aspects of subjectivity, agency, activity and human relations (for example, Anderson, 1997; Gergen and Kaye, 1992; McNamee and Gergen, 1992, 1999; Rosen and Kuehlwein, 1996). And with activity theory, in addition to Sawyer’s pioneering work relating to performance as a socio-cultural-historical unit of analysis, Lobman (2003, under review) brings postmodern ideas to bear on Vygotskian approaches to early childhood education. Unlike in psychoanalytic and group dynamics approaches, what is important in all this work is the *collaborative activity of performance*; the focus is on the ensemble activity of creating the performance rather than on interpreting what it “means.”

From a social therapeutic perspective, the human capacity to perform, that is, to be both "who we are" and "who we are becoming/who we are not" at the very same time, is the source of qualitative change. Performance is the activity by which human beings transform and continuously reshape the unity that is *us-and-our environment*. The attention to performance and the dramaturgical nature of human life is a promising direction for completing (in Vygotsky’s sense) a qualitatively different methodology for psychological research and practice. The potential of this activity perspective on performance has been noted by Neimeyer: “The ironic but liberating insight that the basic

“reality” of human beings is that they are “pretenders” lies at the heart of [the] performative approach to social therapy...This non-essentializing stance undermines the totalizing identification of self with any given role, and gives impetus to activity-based initiatives that prompt communities of persons to transcend the limiting scripts they are offered by dominant social institutions (Neimeyer, 2000, p. 195)

Truth. Postmodernists are the most recent leaders in battling objectivity and Truth by constructing subjectivist accountings of truth. For example, social constructionists search for forms of dialogue alternative to objectivist-based debate and criticism (McNamee and Gergen, 1992, 1999), narrativists work to expose the “storiness” of our lives and help people create their own (and, most often, better) stories (McLeod, 1997; Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston, 1997; Rosen and Kuehlwein, 1996; White and Epston, 1990), and collaborative therapists emphasize the dynamic and co-constructed nature of meaning (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Paré and Larner, 2005; Strong and Paré, 2004). While aligned with this anti-positivist tradition, social therapy—as activity-theoretic—goes beyond positing subjectivist accountings of truth (many truths, all with a small “t”) to reject truth (in both its upper and lower case forms) *in favor of activity*. The ontological shift to activity transforms discourse (in particular, therapeutic discourse) from an epistemological appeal to either an objective, outer Truth/Reality or subjective, inner truths and realities—to an activist, self-reflexive engagement of the creating of the discourse itself (what is/is becoming). The shift involves relating to therapeutic discourse as performance, and to clients as an ensemble of performers who are, with the therapists’ help, staging a new therapeutic conversation (a therapy play) each session. Performing therapy exposes the fictional nature of “the truth” of our everyday language,

our everyday psychology and our everyday stories and allows people to experience themselves as the collective creators of their emotional growth (Newman, 1999).

Social therapeutic methodology is one particular synthesis of activity theory and postmodernism. There are, no doubt, many other ways to create a new relationship between these two socially based critical theories, ways that make postmodern psychology more radical and more rigorous—and, thereby, less vulnerable to critiques from both left and right.

Notes

1. This article draws upon ongoing conversations with Fred Newman, and presentations linking activity theory and postmodernism, in particular, two 2002 lectures: “Performing Across Boundaries: The Activity of Creating New Cultures,” at the Fifth Congress of the International Society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory (ISCRAT) in Amsterdam, and “When Social Constructionism Meets Activity Theory,” at Celebrating Hope through Dialogue: Systemic Social Constructionism in Action, Canterbury, UK, sponsored by the Kensington Consulting Centre.

2. The distinction between Revolution and revolutionary activity is an important one: “The activity of making the Revolution is a quite specific (and failed) revolutionary activity” (Newman and Holzman, 1997, p. 109).

3. Vygotsky made clear his debt to Marx as methodologist: “I don’t want to discover the nature of mind by patching together a lot of quotations. I want to find out how science has to be built, to approach the study of mind having learned the whole of Marx’s method” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 8).

4. “Production does not only produce man as a *commodity*, the *human commodity*, man in the form of a *commodity*; in conformity with this situation it produces him as a *mentally* and *physically dehumanized* being” (Marx, 1967, p. 111),

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