PART IV

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH
COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

The self becomes a project, not as a fully formed ‘thing’, something that is constructed in the processes of mutual recognition in social life. The affirmation of themselves as independent agents…
(Pinkard 1996)

To resolve the impasse at which Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) has arrived, I propose a new unit of activity to represent the whole of which actions are a part. So in Leontyev’s three levels of activity, with operations and (joint artifact-mediated) actions, we are to introduce a new unit for ‘an activity’. To introduce this proposal we must first of all explain the concepts of ‘project’ and ‘collaboration’.

For ‘project’, the Oxford English Dictionary has:

A planned or proposed undertaking; a scheme, a proposal; a purpose, an objective; a collaborative enterprise,…planned to achieve a particular aim. An exercise in which students study a topic, either independently or in collaboration, over an extended period.
(OED Online)

This is consistent with what is meant here, but we need further explanation to determine a dialectical conception which is suitable for the pivotal role it needs to play in the development of CHAT.

For collaboration, the Oxford English Dictionary has simply: “United labour, co-operation; esp. in literary, artistic, or scientific work” (OED Online). This is not quite sufficient, because we shall make a distinction between collaboration and cooperation and the concept needs more explanation.

These two concepts are closely connected with one another; projects are essentially collaborative¹ and collaboration is possible only with some project. Consequently, from time to time we may refer to collaboration and projects separately, whilst retaining the understanding that the two are essentially inseparable. Likewise actions are always

¹ Solo projects are conceivable as a limiting case, but such efforts invariably turn out to be part of larger projects involving others, or at the very least look to others for appreciation or support.