The first department to be established within RAKhN was the Physico-Psychological Department (PPD) directed by Vasilii Kandinsky (Anatolii Bakushinsky took over after his emigration). The research at the Department was of a synthetic nature, an orientation that informed the lectures and debates that followed in the early years. Especially relevant among them were the papers given by the philosopher, Semeon Frank, on the "Role of Art in the Positive Sciences," by the art historians, Alexander Gabrichevsky on "The Study of Artistic Form" and Bakushinsky on "The Perception and Experience of the Work of Art," by the physiologist, Alexander Samoilov, on "The Physiology of Sight and Sound," and by the physicist, Nikolai Uspensky, "On the Border of Art and Science." The principal goal of the PPD, then, was to study the artistic process and this encompassed a wide spectrum of topics such as time and space in the figurative arts, physical and chemical investigations into paint, light, and color, the essential components of music, the language of theatrical performance and so on. The PPD also aspired to understand the laws of artistic form and their application in the various arts, for example, spatiality in music and poetry or construction and composition in the plastic arts. In other words, the PPD aspired towards a genuine, synthetic understanding of the problems of art and art theory, something that defined the direction and methodology of RAKhN as a whole.

Such fundamental issues established a general context for the particular investigations into psychology within the PPD and its various study groups or commissions concerned with the perception of space (1924), artistic creativity (1924), creativity under the influence of hypnosis and hypnotic suggestion (1924), and the art of the insane (1923). 1924 saw the establishment of a psychological laboratory (later called the Laboratory of Experimental Esthetics and Art History) and the following year a Commission for Art Education. The former assumed an almost autonomous position, developing experimental approaches to esthetics and art history. The psychology of children's art and art education also re-
ceived attention at the hands of the Commission for the Study of Primi-
tive Art and Children's Creativity. The commissions also collaborated with
other subdivisions in their researches on various psychological issues, for
example, with the subsection on the psychology of music (in the Music
Section), whose members included the psychologists Sofia Beliaeva-Ex-
empliarskaia (President), Larisa Blagonadezhina, Ekaterina Maltseva, and
others. The subsection on the psychology of stage design worked under
the auspices of the Theater Section (and included the psychologist Boris
Teplov and the psycho-physiologist, Pavel Yakobson). The Choreological
Laboratory, directed by Alexander Larionov and Alexei Sidorov, con-
ducted practical experiments in an attempt to register a correspondence
between mental state and plastic pose.

Psychology became an organic part of RAKhN through a natural pro-
gression. According to the psychologist Lev Vygotsky (cf. his Psychology
of Art) any investigation into art was always bound to take account of
this or that psychological presupposition or datum. In his Poetics, a work
devoted to the theory of the oral artistic work, Aristotle touched on the
problem of how we perceive the poetic image and its effect on the indi-
vidual. Indeed, it is precisely the idea of catharsis that the Poetics devel-
ops, i.e., the purgation of insanity and passion by means of art.

Generally speaking, the creative act and its reception by the individual
used to be identified as the key aspects of the esthetic object that con-
cerned the psychologist. In the twentieth century, however, this commit-
ment expanded with Freud's theories of art, psychoanalysis, and Jung's
analytical psychology. In Russia, a new approach to the psychology of
art was proposed by Vygotsky who spoke of art as "the social technol-
ogy of feelings, an instrument of society, the means by which the most in-
timate and most personal side of our nature can be brought into the
realm of social life." Even though his primary book on the psychology of
art (1925) was published only posthumously (1965), it was well known
to art historians and commanded their respect. The psychology of art
was also of interest to another well known psychologist of the time, i.e.,
Alexei Leontiev, while Teplov conducted research on the notion of
artistic ability and the psychology of musical talent, especially in the
1940s.

In other words, art criticism and psychology respectively, at least in
the late nineteenth century, may both have been investigating the artistic
process, but their paths ran parallel without intersecting. However, the
twentieth century tended to undermine any apparent compartmentaliza-
tion of the sciences, to question perimeters and boundaries, and to seek

1. L. Vygotsky, Psikhologija iskusstva (M: Iskusstvo, 1987), p. 239.