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Conference of the Education Committees of the Pavlov Institute of
Physiology, the Institute of Experimental Medicine of the Academy of
Science USSR, and the Leningrad Society of Physiologists, Biochemists

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Fiziologichesky Zhurnal CCCP imII. M. Sechenov,
Vol 37, 1951, No 3, pp 385-388, Russian per.

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THE MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCILS OF THE INSTITUTE OF
PHYSIOLOGY IMENI I. P. PAVLOV OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USSR,
THE INSTITUTE OF EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE OF THE ACADEMY OF MEDICAL
SCIENCES USSR, AND THE LENINGRAD SOCIETY OF PHYSIOLOGISTS,
BIOCHEMISTS AND PHARMACOLOGISTS

Source: The USSR Fiziologicheskii Zhurnal imeni I. M. Sechenov
 (The USSR Physiological Journal imeni I. M. Sechenov),
 Volume 37, No 3 May-June, 1951. Pages 385-388. The
 Press of the Academy of Sciences USSR, Moscow.

A general session of Scientific Councils of the Institute of Physiology imeni I. P. Pavlov of the Academy of Sciences USSR, the Institute of Experimental Medicine of the Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, and the Leningrad Society of Physiologists, Biochemists and Pharmacologists imeni I. M. Sechenov, convened in Leningrad on 28 June 1951.

The meeting was devoted to consideration of the results obtained in April and June of 1951 at the Third [III] and Fourth [IV] Sessions of the Scientific Council on the problems of the physiological teachings of Academician I. P. Pavlov, sponsored by the Academy of Sciences USSR, at which there was sharp criticism of the anti-Pavlovian attitude of Academicians I. S. Beritashvili and L. A. Orbeli. President of the Scientific Council, K. M. Bykov, presented a large report on this question.

After a general characterization of the work of the III and IV Sessions of the Scientific Council, Academician K. M. Bykov emphasized that the brilliant work of I. V. Stalin published a year

ago, "Marxism and Questions of Linguistics", was not only a valuable addition to the science of linguistics, but also had tremendous significance for all fields of Soviet science. Physiologists must understand the contentions of Stalin and make them their guide in scientific-research work.

Then Academician K. M. Bykov considered the significance of the sessions the two academies held last year, which dealt with the development of Pavlovian physiological teachings. The past year has shown that the decisions of this session, which marked the road for further development of the materialistic teachings of I. P. Pavlov, have been transformed into reality by Soviet physiologists both from the theoretical viewpoint and in the practice of medicine and agriculture.

At the same session K. M. Bykov noted that the work plans of several leading physiological, scientific-research institutions of Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilis and Kiev, heard and discussed at the meeting of the Scientific Council, have shown that there are still some physiologists who do not stand firmly on the correct materialistic Pavlovian position and so hinder the successful development of Pavlovian teachings.

The report of I. S. Beritashvili, "The Practical and Methodological Basis for Teachings on Reflexes and Reactions", which was heard at the III session of the Scientific Council and subjected to profound criticism from all sides, has shown that Academician I. S. Beritashvili continues to support an anti-Pavlovian position, that his conceptions exhibit an outspoken dualism and contradict the Pavlovian teachings about higher nervous system activity. As a

result of the discussion I. S. Beritashvili admitted the error of his position and expressed a readiness to correct his previous mistakes in future work.

Characterizing the work of the IV session of the Scientific Council, K. M. Bykov disclosed in detail the essence of the idealistic outlook of Academician I. A. Orbeli.

The speaker pointed out that the neo-Kantian idealistic position maintained by Academician Orbeli in the past has been reflected in all his subsequent work. In his idealistic outlook Academician Orbeli set himself against the materialistic views of I. M. Sechenov and I. P. Pavlov. "Synthesizing" the Pavlovian position with the views of his western European teachers -- Hering, Garten, Lengli, and others, I. A. Orbeli arrived at a revision of the teachings of I. P. Pavlov: psychophysical parallelism in the study of the sensory organs; incorrect formalist genetics; study of the types of nervous systems isolated from external environmental influences; incorrect treatment of the role of the sympathetic nervous system (giving it the role of regulating and controlling all functions of the organism, including higher nervous activity); disregard for the leading role of the cerebral cortex in all processes taking place in the organism; mistakes in comprehending the secondary perceptive system, etc.

Academician K. M. Bykov paid special attention to the question of analyzing the secondary perceptive system on the basis of Stalin's teachings on language, which must be the methodological basis for the experimental and clinical development of the given problems.

The teachings of comrade Stalin disclose the socialist systematic pattern of language, while the teachings of I. P. Pavlov about the secondary perceptive system touch on the same problem, but from the standpoint of the physiological study of the nervous mechanisms of speech, language and thought.

Special attention must be given to the criticism by Stalin of the theoretical mistakes of Academician N. Ya. Marr, since the mistakes tolerated by some physiologists, for example L. A. Orbeli, are of the same type.

The mistakes of Academician Marr are an instructive lesson for physiologists studying the secondary perceptive system. Academician Marr put the accent on semantics, separating it from phonetics, while Academician Orbeli put the accent on the abstract-thinking side of the secondary perceptive system, separating it from the speech-making and articulative side. In his book, Questions of Higher Nervous Activity (1949, page 585), L. A. Orbeli points out, "... the study of the act of speaking in itself is extremely important and necessary, but it is still not the study of the secondary perceptive system".

Academician K. M. Bykov gave a detailed analysis of the methodological mistakes tolerated in the treatment of the secondary perceptive system. On the one hand idealistic mistakes have been tolerated, particularly by L. A. Orbeli, including separation of the secondary perceptive system from the primary; on the other hand there have been mistakes of a mechanistic type, especially by Professor S. M. Dobrogayev: the secondary perceptive system has been reduced to a combination of "speech reflexes", with disregard for

the abstract-thinking side of the activity of the secondary perceptive system. Such a simplified mechanistic approach to this problem is found in the article of Professor S. I. Gal'perin, "The Importance of the Teachings of I. P. Pavlov on the Secondary Perceptive System" (Vestnik [Herald] of the Leningrad State University, Number 2, 1950). S. I. Gal'perin reduces the physiological nature of the second perceptive system to the speech function.

Academician K. M. Bykov pointed out that L. A. Orbeli still has not really acknowledged the essence of his idealistic, anti-Pavlovian mistakes and has not written a penetrating analysis of them, limiting himself only to a formal admission.

"The great Pavlov", said Academician K. M. Bykov in conclusion, "was not afraid to admit his mistakes, he was not afraid to point out the shortcomings of his work, emphasizing that it was impossible to progress without an analysis of mistakes. Only thorough-going Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism, which completely exposes the idealistic concepts of I. S. Beritashvili and L. A. Orbeli, will help Soviet physiological science, armed with the general instructions of the leader of science Comrade Stalin, to develop still more fruitfully the materialistic teachings of I. P. Pavlov."

Secretary of the Scientific Council E. Sh. Ayrapet'yants ~~acquainted those present with the decisions of the Scientific Council~~ concerning the physiological teachings of Academician I. P. Pavlov and strongly criticized the position of Academician Orbeli.

He emphasized that even though the reports of Orbeli and Beritashvili were considered separately, with a two-month interval,

one had the impression that the same question had been considered twice -- the struggle of materialism with idealism, the disclosure of the anti-Pavlovian positions of Academicians Beritashvili and Orbeli. As it turned out, the intellectual positions of these two physiologists, while diverging on particular scientific questions, are parallel in their contradiction and idealistic appraisal of Pavlovian teachings, around which all Soviet physiologists have united.

E. Sh. Ayrapet'yants noted that Academician Orbeli decided to use waiting tactics after the session of the two academies. He remained silent and withdrew from active work upon realization of the decisions of the session. Instead of admitting his mistakes fully, Orbeli attempted to discredit the founders of our national physiology -- I. M. Sechenov and I. P. Pavlov, negating their materialist views, one after the other, presenting I. P. Pavlov as an empiricist stepping aside from the struggle of materialism with idealism.

In conclusion E. Sh. Ayrapet'yants reminded his audience that foreign assailants of the teachings of I. P. Pavlov have always resorted to discrediting his teachings and to forcing an intensification of the struggle for purification of Pavlovian materialist teachings.

Regular member of the AMN USSR, P. S. Kupalov, noted that Academician Orbeli maintained a Kantian idealist position, as is evident from his doctoral dissertation, and still has not given a criticism of his idealistic outlook.

Professor P. S. Kupalov presented an analysis of the mistakes and distortions in the teachings of I. P. Pavlov on higher nervous system activity which have been tolerated by L. A. Orbeli. Kupalov considered at length the mistakes of Orbeli on the question of applying the evolutionary principle in physiology.

Professor Orbeli insisted incorrectly that animals which are born with an incompletely-formed nervous system have advantages over animals born with determined hereditary characteristics which cannot evolve greatly in subsequent life. However, it is difficult to imagine that a kitten, which is born blind, somehow surpasses a horse, which is born with a number of formed hereditary reactions. Academician Orbeli insists that newly acquired functions are superimposed on former ones and, applying this to man, says that a half-monkey resides inside everyone of us. In this way, according to Orbeli, during the process of evolution there is a mechanical building-up and superimposition of new functions on old, which does not correspond at all to reality and is methodologically incorrect.

L. A. Orbeli in a similar manner approaches the question of the origin of the secondary perceptive system. Orbeli assumes that a child's first sounds (gurgling, hissing, etc.) lead to the formation of speech condition reflexes which are reinforced by parents and other people which surround the child. From this it follows that words arise from the accidental snortings of the child, from spraying of saliva, which do not correspond to the actual process of speech development.

Corresponding member of the AMN USSR, Professor D. A. Biryukov, noted in his talk that Academician Orbeli biologizes the problem of

the secondary perceptive system, finding the rudiments of the purely human speech function of the secondary perceptive system in animals. Falling mechanistically into the biologism of the problem of the secondary perceptive system, Academician Orbeli also slides into an idealistic conception of it in a spirit of psycho-physical parallelism.

Professor Biryukov pointed out the conceptual proximity of Academicians Orbeli and Beritashvili in their struggle against the teachings of I. P. Pavlov. If Beritashvili defended an idealistic conception of psycho-nervous activity, Orbeli would also be inclined to accept it in essence, only with the correction that it should be neuro-psychic.

Academician Orbeli made a gross idealistic mistake in his insistence that animals inherit some kind "of potentiality, which guarantees future generations more and more adaptability to new conditions". Biryukov emphasized the Pavlovian concept that the only form of adaptation is conditioned reflexes. Attempts to find some other kind of special "potentiality" are attempts to revise the Pavlovian teachings and in essence are close to the lies that Academician Beritashvili taught about "psycho-nervous activity".

In analyzing the problem of the specificity of function of various parts of the nervous system and saying that the teachings of I. P. Pavlov about analyzers ensue from this point, Academician Orbeli belittles the role of the external environment in the formation of nervous system activity. Thus, Academician Orbeli ignores the teachings of I. M. Sechenov and I. P. Pavlov which show the identity and interaction of the organism with its external environment. This puts him on the anti-Pavlovian course denying the role

of training in the processes of the higher nervous system. This is, in essence, a renovated statement of "the law of specific energy in the sensory organs" of Johannes Muller, which was subject to sharp criticism in its time by V. I. Lenin. By means of similar statements, Academician Orbeli is trying to drag a unique fighter for materialism -- I. P. Pavlov -- into the camp of the "physiological idealists" -- the Kantians J. Muller, Helmholtz, etc.

At times Academician L. A. Orbeli tried to degrade I. P. Pavlov and his teachings. Unadmittedly, according to Orbeli, it was really Sherrington, Hering and Hess who laid the foundation for the teachings of I. P. Pavlov, while at the same time everyone knows that he got his ideas from our Russian materialistic philosophy and our progressive national science.

Professor A. G. Voronin noted that while the two formidable physiologists -- I. S. Beritashvili and L. A. Orbeli -- diverge on a number of particular problems of physiological science, their methodological mistakes have the same root -- idealism.

Academician Beritashvili carried on an unyielding struggle against the progressive physiological teachings of I. P. Pavlov for many years. Siding with foreign obstructionists in physiology -- the Englishman Sherrington and American Fulton -- Beritashvili used every means to prove that the teachings of Pavlov were hypothetical, that it is not possible to explain the "psychic" activity of man and animals with the help of the physiological laws discovered by Pavlov. I. S. Beritashvili belittled the significance of the laws of conditioned-reflex activity which were disclosed by Pavlov. Individual creative ability, according to I. S. Beritashvili, would

appear to be determined by a higher, "psycho-nervous activity"; psychologists conceived this notion in the form of ideas about the soul, which stands above physiological laws.

This frankly idealist conception, which attempts to take science back to pre-Pavlovian times, was exposed at the joint session of the two Academies and the III Session of the Scientific Council.

The flowering of the idealistic activity of I. S. Beritashvili was assisted by the circumstance that Academician Orbeli, who supervised the leading Pavlovian institutions, several scientific journals and physiological societies, held a conciliatory attitude towards hostile theories, and in a number of cases, as was shown at the IV Session of the Scientific Council, suppressed the development of criticism and self-criticism. Academician Orbeli did not make one statement against the anti-Pavlovian Beritashvili, against the attempts by some of his students to revise the teachings of Pavlov. He also offered no resistance to the hostile enemies of Pavlov. This is explained by the fact that Orbeli, who affirmed anti-Pavlovian ideas in science, was not able to conduct the struggle for clarifying the conceptual basis of the physiological teachings of Pavlov.

Unanimous criticism of the idealistic views of I. S. Beritashvili and L. A. Orbeli by a great association of Soviet physiologists attests to the victory in our science of a new, progressive approach for the development of the physiological teachings of Pavlov.

The director of the State Institute of Natural Science imeni

P. F. Lesgafta, A. A. Shibanov, presented at great length the idealistic mistakes of Academician Orbeli in understanding the relationship between the physiological and the psychic. Orbeli concedes the identity of the physiological and the psychic only for the lower forms of psychic activity (sensation, perception, etc.), but denies it for higher forms of psychic activity -- thinking. In connection with this, in the study of the higher nervous activity of man, Orbeli prefers the subjective method to the objective one. This is the origin of the incorrect anti-Pavlovian tendencies of L. A. Orbeli in the problem of the secondary perceptive system.

A. A. Shibanov admitted that the correct attitude toward eliminating subordination to the authority of Academician Orbeli was not taken by the Institute of Natural Science imeni P. F. Lesgafta after the joint session of the two Academies. There was only timid criticism of his mistakes inside the Institute, without arousal of wide circles of the scientific society. The supervisors of the Institute did not clearly formulate the question nor insist in reorganizing the plan of the physiology laboratory, supervised by Academician Orbeli. This stand against the advanced Pavlovian physiological science was a faulty approach, which led Orbeli and his co-workers into a swamp of opposition.

Z. I. Barbashov, speaking for the workers directed by Academician Orbeli in the physiology laboratory of the Institute imeni P. F. Lesgafta, stated that the workers of the laboratory fully affirmed the decisions of the IV Session of the Scientific Council in the case of Academician L. A. Orbeli, in which it was noted that Academician Orbeli had in essence maintained old, erroneous positions.

Admitting his mistakes formally, L. A. Orbeli started to justify himself and transfer his blame to others, in particular, to I. P. Pavlov.

Up to the present time Academician Orbeli has had pathological attitude towards criticism and critics, which does not permit him to appraise correctly the fundamental significance of the criticism of his address.

The unwillingness to reexamine his erroneous methodological position may eventually lead Academician L. A. Orbeli into the reactionary camp, the camp of our enemies, which he may or may not want.

At the end of the discussion, a resolution was adopted in which the participants in the meeting affirmed the decisions of the III and IV Session of the Scientific Council on the problems of the physiological teachings of Academician I. P. Pavlov and condemned the anti-Pavlovian position of Academicians Beritashvili and Orbeli. The resolution states that L. A. Orbeli has still only formally accepted the criticism of his erroneous viewpoint and has not published a deep critical analysis of his anti-Pavlovian position in the press.

The participants in the meeting admitted the necessity for carrying on the struggle against all attempts at revision and idealistic distortions of the materialistic teachings of I. P. Pavlov. The resolution points out the necessity of carrying out work in all Leningrad physiological, medical and biological institutions concerned with exposing the anti-Pavlovian outlook of I. S. Beritashvili and L. A. Orbeli.

The participants in the meeting received the text of a letter from the brilliant leader of science Comrade I. V. Stalin with exaltation and rejoicing. Comrade Stalin promised to apply all forces to achieve a final eradication of anti-Pavlovian outlooks and tendencies in Soviet physiological science, so that it may be directed fully to the service of our great socialist Motherland.

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