



Historical-Cultural Theory

Studies and research

edited by

Guido Benvenuto and Maria Serena Veggetti



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In copertina: L.S.Vygotskij - Date, 1925 (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lev-Semyonovich-Vygotsky-1896-1934.jpg>)

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Studying Vygotskij.

Introduction to the seminar on "Dissemination of the Historical-Cultural Theory"

Guido Benvenuto, Serena Veggetti

This international study seminar, published here in full thanks to the presentations given by the various invited speakers, was conceived as an opportunity for discussion and exchange on themes and issues that the figure of Vygotsky has wisely raised, treated and reflected on. Themes and research perspectives that over the years have raised and continue to raise decidedly different interpretative plans and positions, both in terms of the translations of his works and the reconstruction of his thought.

This study day was conceived with a view to offering different reading angles by national and international experts. Over the years, the participants in the seminar have devoted particular attention to the Vygotsky's theories, to his researches and methodologies, in the diversity of roles and skills, and above all they have used his reflective categories and topics to actualize their research and their studies in the most diverse disciplinary fields.

A truly rare opportunity for meeting and reflection this day, which the organizers were able to plan and manage thanks to the precious recognition and funding that Sapienza, University of Rome, devoted to the Dissemination of the Historical cultural Theory: studies and research project. (International Relations funds: DD. n. 910/2019 of 25.02.2019 PROT. 0017757).

Before even introducing the various interpreters of this day, as organizers of the seminar and editors of the proceedings, we would like to clarify the various scientific debts that we have accrued in recent years through Vygotsky's study. The idea of organizing this seminar arises precisely from the various stimuli that Vygotsky provided to our

Indice dei nomi indexresearch. A small and distinct biographical note on our study and approach to the author can help introduce the centrality of Vygotsky's thought, his theories, and his approach, and at the same time open this meeting as a place for dialectical confrontation between interpreters and interpretations of a scholar who continues to suggest cultural perspectives and paths of extraordinary utility in the psycho-pedagogical field.

The invited speakers to the conference started with introducing their path in discovering Vygotskij. So will I briefly also give an account of my case. As foreign scholar at the Moscow University Lomonosov had my first encounter with the Historical cultural Psychology when A.N. Leont'ev, appointed as my tutor, brought me for reading the book *Myshlenie i rech* (*Thinking and speech*)¹, unobtainable in the libraries and ever since supervised my acquaintance with the conception. From the first encounter with him I could notice a deep scientific and personal involvement in considering Vygotskij as founder of a new psychology and as colleague and person. A second edition after 1934 was published and edited by him with Luria and Teplov in 1956. In gifting me this book he looked at the printed inside photo of Vygotskij and caressed it. From then on our meetings consisted for me on debating the main positions of this theory, since my reading was of a Russian text having still no foreign translation at that moment.

Vygotskij intended, together with Luria and other representatives of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years in Russia to give foundation to a new science, which, in 1926, he defines a science of education.

Not by chance his first official Speech about Psychology (1924/25) was devoted to a topic like human consciousness, generally and firmly excluded from the community of psychologists in all countries as being a not observable object.

Posing such difficult object excluded immediately the adoption, for the new science, of a paradigm of natural sciences. The methodological references to Marxian philosophy proposed by Vygotskij, though shared by many circles of scholars in many countries, moved from the

¹ The title of *Myshlenie i rech* might have different versions. *Thought and language* was the first Western edition, being very soon considered not suitable for a developmental/genetic conceptualization. The period referred to was 1962-64.

ambitious aim of making up a trend lacking in the same Marxian philosophy, an anthropology of man as citizen freed from capitalistic society.

Some of his conceptions had great dissemination all over the world, though not living Vygotskij. He was ignored even in his country.

The famous delineation of the Zone of proximal development, the sociogenesis of higher mental processes, the becoming a person, the anthropogenesis as moved by the joint experience of the relations with others are, as the further reading of the Interventions of each Speaker will demonstrate, the way the Vygotskyan conception is looked at today, with its possible development for the education of pupils and youngsters collectives in the future.

In the present volume the reader will find different contributions: starting from the exposition of Rubzov, firstly associated by V.V. Davydov in the Direction of the Psychological Institute of the Academy of Sciences (commonly referred to as P.I.R.A.O.), historical cultural psychologist of third generation, who deepened and submitted to consequent experiencing the didactical activities improving some higher mental processes like reflection, to the suggestions by G. Arias Beatón, Head of the Vygotskij's chair of the University in La Habana, Cuba, to the penetrating invite of L. Mecacci to always considering the Vygotskijan conception with reference to the historical context of his scientifical activity, till the suggestions by J.D. Ramirez claiming for an extension of the historical cultural theory to our digital technological era. A further group of Presentations gives evidence of the possible use of the analysis of the early forms of reasoning in pre-school aged children, like the research of C. Pontecorvo and C. Zucchermaglio. F.Cimatti has delineated the topic of freedom in explanation of man, very important to Vygotskij's semiotic conception and for a deeper understanding of the unconscious. At the same time, S.Gensini reinterprets the Vygotskyian perspective of a philosophy of language open to the interdisciplinary relationship with psychology, with ethology, with neurology, with the semiotics of communication.

As a conclusive consideration, the Intervention of G.Benvenuto provides evidence of the opportunity of the cultural historical conception for a pedagogical action on the zone of proximal (next) development, in the perspective of Inclusion. At the same time, the

S.Veggetti presentation explains how gives this conception way to the predisposing learning settings with major care for educational and instructional processes in order not to live to unprovided contexts their formation.

To further improve and facilitate the international acquaintance to joint experiences in the frame of upper exposed conception, two double degree Magister Programmes in Pedagogy and sciences of Education and formation were activated at the Sapienza University: a first one,existing already since a decennial,between the Sapienza and the Vygotskyan University of Moscow MSUPE (Moscow State University for Psychology and Education), headed by Rubtzov as Rector, actually President, offering a Master for the formation of Teachers for the new Historical Cultural School to be opened in Russia. A second among the Sapienza, same Magister Programme, and the Northern Caucasus Federal University at Stavropol. A recent publication, granted by Sapienza University and available online², collects an internationalization perspective for research and teaching.

A final consideration to introducing the collection of these conference proceedings. In the various contributions, all the authors refer to the works of Vygotsky in the various Russian, English, Spanish or Italian editions. It should also be considered that the citations and references to the author's texts may refer to translations that have occurred over the years. Therefore, we preferred to leave in the various contributions the bibliographic indications that each author considered appropriate or to which he had access. In this way, the widespread diffusion of Vygotsky's texts remains even more evident, both in translations and editions.

²BenvenutoG., VeggettiM.S. (Eds.) *Psycho-pedagogical research in a Double-degree program*, edited bySapienza Università Editrice, Rome 2020.

1. Cultural-Historical Scientific School: Issues that L.S. Vygotsky brought up

Vitaly Vladimirovich Rubzov

The aim of my presentation is to introduce you to the principal points of the Cultural-historical psychology. I will draw your attention to the main issues that were raised by the founder of this scientific school Lev Vygotsky and that were broadly discussed by his disciples and his followers. The discussion of these issues in our University is extremely important for understanding the results of contemporary scientific research, which is conducted in the framework of the Cultural-historical tradition. We will constantly refer to these issues during the ISCAR Summer University while reflecting on the data that you have collected in your research.

1.1. The fundamentals of the cultural-historical theory

I will discuss these fundamentals referring to a large extent to the point of view of my teacher, V.V. Davydov. In his opinion the foundations of the cultural-historical concept were laid down by L.S. Vygotsky himself around 1927–28. Later he contributed largely to the development of these fundamentals. But both during Vygotsky's life and after his demise, a significant part in disclosing the very essence of this concept, its elaboration and specification played his direct students, and later — his followers. To Vygotsky's direct students belong preeminently A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luriya, L.I. Bozhovich, A.V. Zaporozhets, D.B. Elkonin, P.Ya. Galperin. According to V.V. Davydov, it is impossible to grasp the essence of the cultural-historical concept without considering that it was to a large extent elaborated, clarified, extended, modified and refined by Vygotsky's students and followers —

that is, by his scientific school. Interestingly enough, already in the 1930-s during Vygotsky's lifetime quite an original theory for that time emerged — the general psychological activity theory, created preeminently by the efforts of A.N. Leontiev and his followers. In the opinion of V.V. Davydov, activity theory represents the direct successor to those principal ideas, which were put as a basis of the cultural-historical concept by Vygotsky himself. In this regard Davydov criticizes those psychologists who argue that Vygotsky did not apply the notion of activity. In Davydov's judgment, Vygotsky, being a connoisseur of German classical philosophy and a true Marxist, could not pass by Marx's distinguished works dedicated to the problems of activity. Already from the beginning of 1925 Vygotsky began to thoroughly examine the social-historical notion of activity and its application in psychology. We should believe therefore Leontiev when he claims that in 1925 Vygotsky began to elaborate the social-historical notion of activity in the context of psychology, and he made a few steps in that direction (Leont'ev A.N., 1975). The fact that Vygotsky had a truly substantial social-historical and partly psychological concept of activity is evidenced by several remarkable pages in one of his articles (which unfortunately had not been published until 1984), where he openly and directly used the term "activity" as a concept and demonstrated that human life, in comparison to the one of animals, is aimed at the future and becomes free by virtue of tools and words (Vygotsky, 1930/1984).

The fundamentals of the cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky, Leontiev, Luria and the whole Vygotskian scientific school were consistently articulated by V.V. Davydov. In his interpretation, they are presented in the following way:

First: the basis for the development of a human being is represented by a qualitative change in a social situation, or, in terms of Leontiev, a change in a person's activity.

Second: universal points of human's mental development are represented by learning and upbringing. Third: the initial form of activity is its full-form execution by the person on the outer — social or collective — plane.

Fourth: psychological neoformations, which emerge in a human being, are derivative from the interiorization of the initial form of human activity. Fifth: significant role in the process of interiorization belongs to different sign and symbol systems.

And finally, sixth: an essential part in the activity of human consciousness belongs to the internal unity of intelligence and emotions.

Without going into detail on these principles of cultural-historical psychology, V.V. Davydov still remarks that the issue of unity of intelligence and emotions had not been elaborated enough. And this is a fundamental challenge in the organization and analysis of the research results by contemporary researchers. On the one hand, L.S. Vygotsky considers meaning as a unit of the development of the psyche (Vygotsky L.S., 1934/1956², 1982³). As we know, according to Vygotsky, giving meaning to a meaningless word represents the primary way of the formation of scientific concepts (in contrast with spontaneous concepts). On the other hand, Vygotsky considers *pereghivanie* as a unit of the development of the psyche, the nature of which relates to commonality, communication and certainly with the emerging emotion. What is the relationship between "meaning" and *pereghivanie*? This question is directly connected with the issue of the connection between intelligence and emotions.

V.V. Davydov also argues that, till now, the notion of collective activity (brought into psychological science by Vygotsky himself) has still not been elaborated. Moreover, since collective activity exists, then consequently its bearer is a collective entity, a collective subject. The concept of collective activity and collective subject is also a new problem (though it has been raised long ago), which needs to be explored and elaborated on at the contemporary level. However, if we are not able to say anything plainly about collective and social forms of human activity, then what can we say about the so-called interiorization, which Vygotsky and his followers perceive as a process of transformation of collective activity into individual activity, and of collective subject into an individual subject?

V.V. Davydov also clarifies some aspects of Vygotsky's approach to human development. For instance, Vygotsky's ideas evolved from his first publication in 1925 to the end of his life. He had never had clear and definite terminology because the theory that he was working on could not be elaborated as fast as he aspired. At the same time, considering his general point of view, a child is born into a social situation, into a communal situation as a human being with all the inherent potential, and develops further as a social and communal being. This also provides much food for thought.

Surely those six principles of the cultural-historical concept formulated by Vygotsky require serious and detailed experimental and theoretical working through. I would like, however, to point out again that according to Vygotsky the beginning of human development is a collective (communal, joint) or social activity carried out by or with the assistance of a collective subject in a cultural environment. The mediums of the culture are signs and symbols; it is thanks to signs and symbols that in the process of learning and upbringing, the individual activity of a person becomes important, and the individual subject becomes clear, and then said subject gains individual consciousness. So, in the very general outline, the pattern of origin of the individual consciousness is this: collective-social activity, culture, signs and symbols, individual activity, individual consciousness. While attempting to highlight the singularity of the cultural-historical theory, it is crucial to keep the original point of view of L.S. Vygotsky himself — to distinguish between the theory and its interpretation in the framework of the activity approach, elaborated by A.N. Leont'ev. It is crucial to avoid reducing cultural-historical theory to cultural-historical activity theory. Doing so means not considering L.S. Vygotsky's idea that the notion "change of social situation" corresponds to the notion "development of activity" in the framework of the activity approach. These notions correlate; however, they are defined in different systems of coordinates — in the framework of the cultural-historical theory on the one hand and in the framework of the activity approach on the other hand. As I have already mentioned, this highlights the singularity of each of the theories and illustrates the history of the development of L.S. Vygotsky's scientific school.

Below I will briefly discuss the meaning of the main concepts of the cultural-historical theory and those issues that are challenging for contemporary research, conducted in the framework of L.S. Vygotsky's scientific school.

1.2. Social situation of development. "Zone of proximal development"

As I have already mentioned, in L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, the social situation is perceived as the source of development. According to Vygotsky, "any function in the cultural development of a child appears twice, in two aspects, first in a social plane and then in a

psychological plane, first between two people as an inter-psychic category, and then inside of a child as an intra-psychic category" [L.S.Vygotsky, 1978, p.145]. Social interactions appear to be genetically social, moreover in its primary form any function is shared among the participants of interaction. Behind all higher mental functions and their relationships stand genetically social relationships, real relationships, homo duplex (a dual person - Latin). From here comes the principle and method of personification in the study of cultural development, that is, division of functions between people, personification of functions. For example, voluntary attention – one acquires, the other onemasters. Dividing again in two what had been fused into one, experimental unfolding of a higher mental process (voluntary attention) into a small drama. (L.S. Vygotsky, 2005, p. 1023).

Social interactions define the mechanism of distribution of functions on the one hand and the means or method of mastering those functions on the other hand. Thus, for example, guided social interactions, which initially serve as instruments for social realization of the processes of cognition and communication later begin to play the role of the cognitive function of self-regulation and mental representation of various kinds of information. These social interactions activate the not yet developed cognitive functions, which allows the student to act on a higher cognitive level. The gap between that which a learner is able to do on his/her own (the actual level of development) and that which he/she is capable of with proper guidance is called "zone of proximal development". Therewith, according to Vygotsky, learning is successful only when it goes ahead of development, when it awakens and brings to life those functions, which are yet in the process of maturing or are in the zone of proximal development. This, in his view, is the way how education plays a crucial role in development.

Now can say that two ideas, formulated by Vygotsky, became cornerstones of the new approach to the issue of learning activity. First is that scientific community clearly realized that social interactions and cognitive development are neither mixed nor independent processes, they are also not reversible (in the sense of "isomorphic") processes, they are not even equivalent processes. They rather are interdependent processes, since generation and development of the one internally depends on development of the other. Deriving benefit and getting effect from specific social interactions, which means really finding oneself in the space of development and making a step up in one's own

achievement, is possible for a child, when there is a certain correspondence to the actual developmental level. But this actual level itself is also the result of previous and future social interactions.

Another important issue is that content of the notion “zone of proximal development” suggests a new paradigm of development, and accordingly a new approach to teaching-learning psychology. The notion of learning as a natural and individual process, dividing participants of the educational situation into teachers and learners, is being replaced by the view of learning as a process of co-action, cooperation and joint activity. Notably, the key mechanism of this process, which makes it culturally and socially determined, is the mediation of cognitive acts by means of interaction between the participants of activity. In this case a new problem comes to the fore: not only what to teach, but also how to teach, i.e., a problem of organizing effective joint forms of learning activity.

1.3. Organizing joint learning activity

The search for effective forms of co-simultaneity (cooperation as a form of interaction) in Vygotsky's scientific school is related to many researchers' works on the concept of “organization of joint activity” which is characterized by:

- distribution and exchange of actions;
- mutual understanding;
- communication;
- reflection as a special kind of operation with modes of cooperative work.

The concept of joint-distributed action (co-action) is a way to refine Vygotsky's idea of distribution of a psychological function as a condition of mastering it in a social situation.

1.4. Joint learning activity as the Zone of proximal development of primary school children

Today, the most flagrant example of the realization of Vygotsky's ideas about collective activity as a form of development, and, basically, the ZPD, in Russia is represented by the experience of two outstanding scholars –Danil Elkonin and prof. Vasily Davidov. At the end of the

sixties, these followers of Vygotsky's cultural-historical school, suggested a practical application of the theory of learning for primary school children (primary school). Curricula, elaborated on the basis of this theory, included such disciplines as Russian language, maths, arts and crafts. These disciplines allowed to organize the learning process as a joint activity of children and adults.

Learning activity is characterized by the following traits:

- In the process of the activity children together with the adult (usually teacher) study scientific (in Davidov terms - theoretical) concepts and corresponding means of activity.
- Children master new means of action while solving particular learning tasks and performing particular learning actions.
- Learning activity is organized by the adult (adults) as a collective activity, based on learning discussions, dialogues and open interaction between children and adult.
- While solving learning tasks and performing learning actions in the form of collective activity, children develop abilities for analysis and planning of their own actions, as well as reflection as a particular ability for considering one's own actions in the context of joint activity.

Now we have a chance to watch a few short videos, shot at the lesson of maths in primary school with children of 8-9 years. I will show these extracts to demonstrate the peculiarity of joint learning activity and discuss the particular characteristics of the development of children in the learning process, which is constructed in accordance with the requirements of the zone of proximal development. The lesson took place in experimental school number 91 ninety-one in Moscow (which is the practical basis of our University). This school uses the learning system by Elkonin-Davydov and supports elaboration and practical application of experimental programs, based on the ideas of the cultural-historical theory and activity approach. The lesson is organized by an experienced teacher Natalya Tabachnikova. There are also professor Gorbov, who is one of the authors of the program, head of the school Natalya Krasavina and professor Harry Daniels from Oxford University present at the lesson. Harry Daniels is a foreign professor at our University; he gives lectures and works with our students and young scholars in the framework of the Master's Program: «Cultural-historical theory and activity approach in education».

So, what can we say observing the work of these children? The experience of organizing learning in the form of joint activity testifies, that zone of proximal development:

- is based on a particularly organized joint activity, aimed at dealing with specific tasks and learning corresponding generalized means of their solution;
- is based on the initiative and autonomous search for ways of solving classes of tasks, as children discover these solutions and learn the general means of solution in the process of interaction with each other and with the adult;
- is based on broad use of signs and models;
- is constructed as a learning community of children and adult.

Even these very short extracts featuring the author of the program and the teacher allow to identify the specific traits of children's development in this kind of community. What are these characteristics? First of all, they include:

- learning motivation
- communication
- mutual understanding
- the way of learning interaction between children and adult

A particular indicator of development is represented by reflexion as a specific ability of the participants to analyze their own actions, consider the limitations of their actions and reconstruct them in accordance with the learning tasks. Reflexion is regarded as the criteria of how children acquire the sense of the actions that they are performing. It is interesting to hear prof. Daniels conclusions.

1.5 On the issue of training researchers of social practise in the framework of the scientific school of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leont'ev, A.R. Luria (the experience of running a master's program: "Cultural-historical theory and activity approach in education")

Today the ideas of the cultural-historical theory and activity approach are perceived as fundamental methodological principles, which allow to study the issues of social practice. Therefore, an important question is: what does it mean to study various kinds of social practice (e.g., educational practice) through the prism of the system of concepts of

the cultural-historical theory and activity approach? The answer to this question relates to the elaboration and organization of the master's program "Cultural-historical psychology and activity approach in education". This program was elaborated and is run in Moscow State University of Psychology and Education and is aimed at training of specialists, capable of studying peculiarities and challenges of child development in education.

In the framework of the first basic module "Methodology of psycho-pedagogical research: activity approach" of the master's program the students get acquainted with the theoretical challenges of the cultural-historical theory and activity approach. In the framework of this module, they are also introduced into the system of concepts of the cultural-historical school and get acquainted with the research conducted by Vygotsky's direct disciples and followers.

An important part of training relates to studying methods of research and their application in the analysis of the challenges of social practice. Thus, the program's second module which is called "Methods of psycho-pedagogical research" is aimed at training the capacity of applying the methods of cultural-historical psychology and activity approach in analyzing challenges of the educational activity and various issues connected with its organization (interaction of participants, distribution of actions, roles, positions, processes of communication and reflection).

In this module special emphasis is placed on the students' practical application of the method of double stimulation of Vygotsky-Sacharov. The content of this method often becomes the issue for serious discussions. I would like to note, that Vygotsky regarded acquisition of meaning in a meaningless word as the main way of child's development. It is thus impossible to grasp the specifics of the developmental act without understanding Vygotsky's idea on how meaning emerges in a child, how in the interaction between the child and adult a directed emotion emerges and finally how the child himself gains the meaning that originally the adult possesses (Vygotsky L.S., Saharov L.S., 1930).

In the framework of the third module: "Theoretical and experimental challenges in research on education and development" each student can choose one of the following fields of specialization: pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and inclusive education. Education and development of children in each of these fields relates to specific methods, however the fundamentals of

the cultural-historical tradition and activity approach underlie all of them. The program presupposes that in the process of specialization the students will not only get acquainted with new approaches but based on the general methodology they will be also able to address a wide spectrum of research activities, aimed at resolving practical tasks of contemporary education. As a matter of fact, the courses of this module allow the students to acquire practical skills of working with children on various stages of their development and study the challenges of education in the system of concepts of the cultural-historical psychology and activity approach.

It is important to highlight the competences that the students need to succeed in our program. They include:

- capacity to plan and model new forms of joint learning activity, corresponding with the zone of proximal development and the age of the students;
- capacity to conduct targeted psycho-pedagogical research on the specifics of the organization of the learning activity and to define new requirements to the organization of joint learning activity;
- capacity to fulfill new forms of organizing learning activity in teamwork (cross-disciplinary cooperation);
- capacity to assess the students' educational results, which are determined by the structure and general patterns of the organization of learning activity, as well as by age and individual differences;
- capacity to reflect on one's own professional achievements, perform professional development based on the conducted psycho-pedagogical research. Acquisition of certain research competences allows to speak of special professional actions, performing of which corresponds with the system of concepts of the cultural-historical theory and which are necessary for studying concrete challenges in organizing learning activity.

Cultural-historical theory, especially its interpretation in the framework of the activity approach, is a grand contribution to modern science. At the same time, as V.V. Davydov noted: "Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept even in its interpretation in the framework of the activity approach is still not truly a theory, but rather a hypothesis. But, as you know, true science finds the source of its development in formulating theories and proving their legitimacy for different areas of social practice. It is the challenge to young scholars — philosophers,

logicians, psychologists, educators, culture studies experts — who are able in the nearest future (hard to say how many years from now) to turn this cultural-historical hypothesis into a full-scale truly fundamental modern theory".

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2. Legado del enfoque histórico cultural para el presente y el futuro

Guillermo Arias Beatón

En primer lugar, deseo dar las más expresivas gracias a los organizadores de este libro por invitarme a reflexionar sobre tan importante tema. Muchos trabajos y debates de este tipo deberían producirse sobre esta concepción nueva y diferente acerca del desarrollo psíquico humano.

En segundo lugar, aunque este trabajo es de mi autoría, deseo reconocer que es un producto de la labor colectiva de estudios, debates e introducción en las prácticas educativas, clínicas, sociales y del trabajo, que por más de 50 años hemos realizado muchos seguidores y estudiosos de estas explicaciones en Cuba, que denominamos enfoque histórico cultural debido a su amplia e integral conceptualización y explicación del desarrollo psíquico humano, desde una diferente orientación ontológica, gnoseológica y epistemológica, en comparación con las psicologías clásicas y tradicionales que predominan.

Creo, por el estudio de su obra, que Vygotski no dudó de las dificultades de aceptación y consolidación que tendría su nueva explicación sobre el desarrollo psíquico humano. Ella era contestataria a las explicaciones de las psicologías tradicionales que existían. Enfrentó también las diferencias de criterios de sus colaboradores. Vivió y abordó este aspecto natural del trabajo científico y los problemas que se producen en cualquier proceso revolucionario en el que se participe. Sus análisis críticos, en diferentes trabajos y cartas, así lo confirman. Su labor para preparar las críticas y contra respuestas a sus detractores, también nos lo sugiere. Un pensador cubano y revolucionario del siglo XIX, que sufrió no menos sobre esto, dijo lo

siguiente:

(...) una revolución verdadera siempre se excede en su primer fervor. El tiempo es el que de todo hace justicia. (Luz y Caballero, 2001, p. 66).

El enfoque histórico cultural es una concepción y explicación revolucionaria a la que aun no se le ha hecho justicia. No obstante, en medio de otra revolución, la cubana, su estudio y empleó en el mejoramiento de la educación, contribuyó significativamente a la labor educativa de varios subsistemas educacionales (Arias, 2001, 2005, 2005a, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017a; Siverio, 1988, 1995; López, Siverio, 1996; López, León, Siverio, 1990, 1991, 1992; Febles, 2001; Fariñas, 2005). El empleo de los fundamentos de este enfoque, fue esencial, desde los años finales de los 60 hasta ahora, para explicar la disminución casi total del fracaso escolar y de los escolares que no aprendían¹.

El conocimiento que este Enfoque postula, contribuyó también, a explicar problemas educacionales en los Estados Unidos en los años 60 y en los 70. Educaciones de avanzada en el mundo, cuando se les estudia, contienen aspectos teóricos, metodológicos y prácticos muy cercanos a esta concepción. (Stevenson, Stigler, 1992). Los fundamentos históricos culturales sobre el desarrollo psíquico humano tratan sobre la libertad, la independencia, la autonomía y la emancipación del ser humano, las que no existen completamente para las grandes mayorías de personas. Sin embargo, no me canso de decir que estas ideas y sueños de los pueblos, no solo son un patrimonio de este enfoque y de las condiciones que le dieron origen; sino que siempre, de una u otra forma han existido en la humanidad. Ellas han tenido muchos luchadores y pensadores que las han ido produciendo poco a poco, en el correr de los siglos e incluso, han existido acciones concretas que lo confirman y en las que han muerto ciento de miles de personas.

¹ Estoy considerando el comienzo de este proceso en 1968-69 cuando el Instituto de la Infancia dirigido por la Ca. Vilma Espín, se propuso un profundo mejoramiento de la educación en las edades mas tempranas de los niños, según la orientación del enfoque histórico cultural. Luego en los años 70 se asumió e inició su introducción, en parte, también del mejoramiento de algunos subsistemas de la Educación por parte del Ministerio de Educación de Cuba.

El enfoque histórico cultural es depositario y encarna ese legado de las luchas de la humanidad por la emancipación humana. Este, también se constituye en su mayor y más importante legado a las generaciones presentes y futuras. Esto se expresa en muchos de los aspectos tratados en sus contenidos, pero el más significativo y concreto es aquel llamado que se hace a la necesidad de una buena educación para producir el desarrollo humano en contraposición a aquella guiada por los mecanismos biológicos, la urgencia de preparar mano de obra calificada y concebir la formación y el desarrollo humano de forma fragmentada según dictan las epistemologías vigentes (Comte, 1934, 1969; Torroella, 1946; Gould, 1997; Arias Beatón, 2001, 2005a, 2006; Coelho, 2005; Hinkelammert, 2006; Rose, 2006; Sokal, Bricmont, 2006).

La humanidad del futuro, no tiene otra alternativa. Es el enfoque histórico cultural el único, hasta ahora, capaz de sustituir o eliminar, los reductos que existen del idealismo, el espiritualismo y del Darwinismo social en la psicología, en la pedagogía y en otras ciencias que tienen que ver con la no plena y no integral formación y desarrollo humano.

Creo que este libro, derivado del coloquio internacional mencionado, es un esfuerzo por destacar los logros y beneficios que posee este enfoque, así como señalar en lo que aun hay que seguir trabajando, estudiando e investigando, para continuar la obra de los que lo iniciaron y los que seguimos bregando con él. Partimos de la consideración de que siempre, las diferencias, el debate e incluso las tergiversaciones, han acompañado a cualquier hecho considerado revolucionario, positivo y transformador, y sobre todo que se muestre diferente y en contrapartida del *status quo* existente.

Trabajamos por destacar los aspectos positivos implícitos en el enfoque histórico cultural; en este caso, en lo que representa para el futuro del desarrollo del ser humana y de la educación. Pero también, para alertar acerca de lo que es necesario continuar mejorando y de los procesos de deformación y domesticación que puedan existir.

No estoy descartando que la sociedad capitalista no haya tenido logros, ella ha sido capaz de producir el desarrollo más descomunal de la ciencia y la técnica (Marx, 2011, 2013), lo que es esencial para que

algún día, cuando la organización y funcionamiento de la sociedad lo permita, esta sea más humana, justa y ética (Marx, Engels, 1982).

Entonces, creo que forma parte del legado del enfoque histórico cultural que trato de delinejar, la explicación del desarrollo psíquico humano que mejor y de forma más acabada, se ha constituido e integrado a partir de las contradicciones e incertidumbres existentes en la historia de la sociedad humana. Este es su origen.

Esta situación particular nos hace pensar en la siguiente pregunta: ¿Por qué en diferentes organizaciones sociales es imposible asumir la esencia que está presente en las explicaciones y concepciones del enfoque histórico cultural sobre el desarrollo de la psique humana? Recuerdo sobre este análisis, esta idea de Vygotski:

Nuestra ciencia no podía ni puede desarrollarse en la vieja sociedad. Ser dueños de la verdad sobre la persona humana y de la propia persona es imposible mientras la humanidad no sea dueña de la verdad sobre la sociedad y de la propia sociedad (Vygotski, 1991, p. 475).

Esta es la idea más política de toda la obra y el trabajo de Vygotski, pues contiene la esencia, la explicación de lo que deseamos decir, pero a su vez, muestra el compromiso social, humanista y optimista de este autor, con las personas, con la sociedad, su cultura y su historia.

Creo que la explicación histórico cultural, todavía no se logra asumir en toda su dimensión, porque las orientaciones y proyecciones políticas, ideológicas y epistemológicas que existen, no se corresponden, consecuentemente, con sus postulados futuristas y sobre todo ontológico sobre la naturaleza, la sociedad y el ser humano. Esto forma parte de nuestra historia y de nuestra cultura y ha de ser un acicate para divulgar, debatir y profundizar los conocimientos que nos brinda este enfoque.

Para mí no hay lugar a dudas, que el enfoque histórico cultural nos brinda una esencia, un legado y un saber indiscutible para las futuras transformaciones que habría que hacer en pro del desarrollo pleno e integral del ser humano, pero, grandes dificultades se continuarán presentando por lo que ya hemos señalado.

El problema, es con la sociedad capitalista hegemónica, que quiere ser eterna y no transformarse, todo lo que atente contra eso, lo trata de rechazar, domesticar y transformar a su beneficio.

Tenemos la experiencia en este mismo sentido, con los pensadores cubanos del siglo XIX, que luchando contra la esclavitud y el

colonialismo que le imponía la corona española al pueblo cubano, idearon y organizaron una educación para formar las generaciones futuras con una conciencia y un pensamiento crítico que les permitieran luchar por la independencia de Cuba del colonialismo (Luz y Caballero, 2001), pero, no obstante estas ideas permanecer en la cultura del pueblo cubano hasta hoy, sufrieron los mismos embates para evitar su materialización y enraizamiento. Por todo esto, los cubanos que comprendemos como un legado el pensamiento histórico de nuestros compatriotas del siglo XIX, asumimos el enfoque histórico cultural, no solo de nuestro país sino del mundo.

Con este análisis más general e importante quise comenzar este escrito, según mi conferencia en el evento realizado. Ahora desarrollaré algunos aspectos particulares inmersos en esta idea central, pero que son fundamentales para explicar mejor lo que deseo destacar.

El siguiente legado en el que quiero detenerme es que Vygotski considera su trabajo como una continuidad de la cultura humana y, en particular, de la ciencia psicológica de todos los tiempos. En relación a esto dice:

No queremos ser simples sin padre ni madre; no padecemos manía de grandeza, pensando que la historia comienza en nosotros ni queremos recibir de ésta un nombre limpio y trivial; queremos un nombre en el que se haya asentado el polvo de los siglos. (Vygotski, 1991, p. 398).

Con estas palabras, Vygotski parte de dos características esenciales del proceso de producción de conocimientos, que forman parte de su método materialista dialéctico e histórico que emplea en su labor científica; la primera, es tener en cuenta la necesidad de apropiarse de todo el conocimiento producido por la psicología con anterioridad y en segundo lugar, el someterlo a un riguroso análisis crítico, porque los tiempos históricos son diferentes, el desarrollo de las ciencias se produce paso a paso y por medio de las contradicciones que aparecen en el movimiento de la naturaleza, la sociedad y la historia.

No obstante, esto que destaco, lamentablemente, disculpen, no tengo otra palabra, tenemos que leer en las críticas estalinistas, que Vygotski asume acríticamente lo que toma de los autores burgueses. (Shuare, 1990).

Por otra parte, algunos importantes intérpretes actuales destacan, que todo lo dicho por este autor ya había sido producido por

sus antecesores o contemporáneos (Van der Veer, Valsiner, 1996), como si las explicaciones de todos los aspectos esenciales que aborda este enfoque, no fueran un producto de los análisis críticos por los que comenzaron Vygotski y sus continuadores sus estudios y trabajos científicos. De las críticas a las teorías de las psicologías tradicionales, Vygotski incluso crea diseños experimentales completamente novedosos y necesarios (Vygotski, 1993), para negar dialécticamente, por ejemplo, la explicación del lenguaje egocéntrico que formula Piaget, entre otros.

Son también propias de este tipo de análisis y aceptación crítica de las explicaciones que se derivan de la psicología tradicional, por ejemplo, de la ley general del desarrollo definida por Gesell (Vygotski, 1989) y que ya se encuentra en Comenio (1983), de la compensación indirecta sacada de la supercompensación de Adler (Vygotski, 1989), del papel de los períodos sensibles de Montessori (Vygotski, 1993), y de la idea fragmentada de que el maestro es el que tiene el papel activo o es el estudiante (Vygotski, 2001). Este proceso metodológico es muy propio de Vygotski, mediante este proceso de análisis crítico de los fundamentos, él invierte o convierte, las explicaciones en una base materialista dialéctica e histórica al relacionarlas genuinamente con la vida real y concreta en la que vive y se desarrolla el ser humano (Politzer, 1964, 1965; Vygotski, 1991).

Muy relacionado con estas ideas que intento explicar, Vygotski muy consciente del trabajo complejo, histórico y colectivo (social) de las ciencias, nos legó la siguiente idea:

Conocemos bien que, al dar el primer paso, no podremos evitar cometer muchos errores y serios. Pero todo el problema reside en que el primer paso sea dado en una dirección correcta. Lo demás vendrá a su tiempo. Lo incorrecto se eliminará, lo que falta se agregará (Vygotski, 1989, p. 308).

Otro legado esencial que se deriva de las concepciones generales señaladas, es la comprensión sobre el papel de lo biológico en el proceso de formación y desarrollo psíquico humano y el lugar que le otorga a lo social y lo cultural, que son histórico en este proceso. Afirman, como llegó a hacer Rubinstein y a sugerir algunos de sus continuadores, que Vygotski era dualista porque no concebía una unidad funcional entre lo biológico, lo social y lo cultural, es una insuficiente comprensión metodológica sobre lo que él explicó y el por

qué lo hizo de esa manera (Rubinstein, 1964, 1967; Leontiev, Luria, Teeplov, 1987).

Deseo destacar, que la concepción de Vygotski, contiene una diferencia esencial con la forma en que se empleaba lo biológico por los autores que le antecedieron o fueron sus contemporáneos. Esta explicación en relación con la unidad indivisible de lo biológico, lo social y lo cultural, aun sigue sin ser plenamente asumida por las psicologías actuales, la lingüística predominante, las neurociencias y las pedagogías más tradicionales. Las prácticas educativas en el mundo todavía son víctimas de esta insuficiencia.

Para el enfoque histórico cultural, los contenidos psíquicos de naturaleza esencialmente biológica, con los que se nace, en estrecha relación y funcionamiento con lo social y cultural se van transformando en neiformaciones psíquicas, de manera tal que las funciones psíquicas iniciales, sin desaparecer, van conformando procesos psicológicos de naturaleza social y cultural, cuya estructura está constituida por la mediación de las acciones de los adultos, coetáneo y los signos que estos emplean por medio de los gestos, el dibujo y el lenguaje. (Spinoza, 1958; Vygotski, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2004; Vygotski, Luria, 1987, 2007; Puzirei, Guippenréiter, 1989).

Muy relacionado con el biologismo o los residuos de esta concepción, el verdadero dualismo que existe en las ciencias de ayer y de hoy sobre el ser humano, se encuentra en la tendencia a no concebir el papel esencial del hacer del sujeto en su vida real y concreta, la integralidad en que este proceso se produce y, la complejidad dinámica y el movimiento del proceso de desarrollo y transformación de un ser humano que nace completamente dependiente y se transforma en un sujeto independiente, activo, crítico y creador de contenidos y medios culturales extremadamente sofisticados.

Este hecho les hizo decir a biólogos de finales del siglo XIX y principio del XX que el ser humano es el único ser vivo que puede distanciarse significativamente de la dependencia de lo que le brinda la naturaleza, porque en ellos las leyes psicosociales actúan de conjunto con las biológicas. (Huxley, 1939).

Los materialistas dialécticos e históricos, incluyendo al Enfoque, le agregan a esta máxima, que es esto lo que permitió la transformación

del propio ser humano, con una psiquis particular y cualitativamente diferente a la de los seres vivos anteriores a él.

No obstante, este legado todavía el autor más publicado y leído de la psicología cognitiva, con una imaginación creativa increíble (Pinker, 1995), insiste en que los procesos psíquicos superiores se desarrollan de forma aislada, como estancos separados unos de otros y que dependen de estructuras establecidas y fijadas, durante la filogenia, en los mecanismos biológicos del ser humano.

¿Cuál es el legado esencial del enfoque histórico cultural frente al creacionismo disfrazado primero de preformismo y luego de científicismo basado en la teoría evolucionista, que desarrollaron Spencer, Haeckel, Gall, Galton, Burt y otros muchos más?

Vygotski parte definitivamente en sus explicaciones que la biología humana es mucho más flexible que la de los seres vivos anteriores a él, que esta flexibilidad es un producto y a la vez, lo que permitió su evolución como ser vivo, lo que hoy en día defienden autores como Gould (1997), Lewontin, Rose y Kamin (1987) y Rose (2006), Pedrol, (2017), Casanova (2017), Sampsom (1996), Arias Beatón (2017c). Ellos sostienen que esto es lo que ha permitido que los seres humanos posean la posibilidad y la libertad de que en dependencia de los contenidos e influencias sociales y culturales que reciben, se formen sus características y peculiaridades humanas. Un ejemplo esencial de esto es toda la fundamentación de los procesos de compensación en el caso de las personas con déficit biológicos (Vygotski, 1989).

Lo que estamos analizando, se relaciona muy estrechamente con las teorías olvidadas e ignoradas de la dominante y la fisiología psicológica de Vvendisky, Ujtomski y Bernshtein, respectivamente, derivadas también de las ideas de Ivan Setshenov.

Resultaría necesario rescatar y profundizar en el estudio de esas teorías, no solo para llegar a una mejor comprensión del papel de la biología y la fisiología en el proceso de conformación de lo psíquico sino, para tener una apreciación más adecuada de las explicaciones del enfoque histórico cultural sobre el proceso de la formación y

desarrollode los procesos psicológicos internos (Ujtomski, 1945², Bernsthein, 1967; Shuare, 2018³; Arias, 2018⁴).

La teoría de la dominante y de la fisiología psicológica fueron empleadas ampliamente en los estudios de Vygotski, Leontiev y Luria esencialmente (Vygotski, 1987, 2001; Leontiev, 1981; Luria, 1974, 1979, 1981). Además, se conocen las críticas a la teoría de Pávlov por parte del propio Vygotski, al declarar las limitaciones de explicar la conciencia a partir de los estudios y los mecanismos de los reflejos condicionados. También mereció una crítica, por parte de él, el empleo de los reflejos condicionados en la explicación de lo psíquico, en el trabajo titulado: El significado histórico de la crisis de la psicología. Un estudio metodológico, donde Vygotski señala la inoperancia, de los principios explicativos, entre otros, los reflejos condicionados que, convirtiéndose en explicación de muchos fenómenos diferentes no explican nada (Vygotski, 1991).

Podemos decir que estas teorías que destacamos como importante para apreciar mejor los fundamentos biológicos y fisiológicos del enfoque histórico cultural, en comparación con la que brinda Pávlov (1960), se ajustan más al complejo proceso dialéctico que se produce entre los mecanismos fisiológicos, ambientales y los psicológicos que se van conformando en la génesis e interrelación de estos procesos. No obstante, se destaca la importante contribución de Pávlov en la explicación refleja de la actividad cerebral en contra partida de un cerebro que se estimula a sí mismo. (Llinas, 2003; Crick, 2000). Este es, a nuestro juicio, el principal aporte de este autor al saber científico sobre la fisiología del cerebro humano.

Los autores mencionados, siendo también continuadores de Setshenov, como Pávlov, les dieron una orientación diferente a los estudios de la fisiología del cerebro humano. Hicieron sus trabajos científicos con una visión más integral, compleja y dialéctica de los procesos neurofisiológicos y psíquicos, asumiendo lo diverso en su unidad y movimiento, en sus interrelaciones, que conforman otra cualidad de la materia viva, lo psíquico humano y sus diversos procesos psicológicos internos. Llegaron a tener una concepción

² Parte de la bibliografía empleada por la Dra. Marta Shuare en la preparación de nuestro curso en USP-EACH y de donde se tradujeron trechos esenciales.

³ Material producido para el Curso en la USP-EACH, que se prepara para su próxima publicación en un eBook por la Editorial de dicha Universidad.

⁴ Material producido para el Curso en la USP-EACH, que se prepara para su próxima publicación en un eBook por la Editorial de dicha Universidad.

filosófica, epistémica, gnoseológica y ontológica, de base: materialista dialéctica e histórica. Por eso como dice Shuare, se negaron a explicar la compleja relación entre el ambiente, lo fisiológico y lo psíquico, por medio del arco reflejo que proviene de la concepción mecanicista y cartesianiana, que resulta insuficiente.

Pávlov, no obstante insistir en su modelo experimental de estudio, pudo ver fenómenos que no se podían explicar plenamente por medio de los reflejos condicionados y por ello trabajó y creó los conceptos de reflejos de libertad y orientación, el papel de la actividad nerviosa superior y concibió la importancia del segundo sistema de señales, pero sin dejar de ubicar y reducir lo psíquico humano a los mecanismos fisiológicos del cerebro.

Por eso Shuare explicando lo que fundamenta Ujtomski dice:

Aunque en la base de la demostración acerca de la existencia de las relaciones entre los diversos dominantes se encuentran investigaciones puramente fisiológicas, Ujtomski no limitó su significado a los procesos fisiológicos, sino que los vinculó con las cuestiones fundamentales de la existencia del hombre, su esencia social y los procesos psíquicos. Este principio permite estudiar no solo los procesos que tienen lugar en el cerebro, sino también las leyes psicológicas de la conducta humana, así como los problemas sociales de la comunicación del hombre en tanto miembro de la sociedad, constituyéndose así en la base de una concepción del hombre, producto de la compenetración mutua entre diversas ciencias: la filosofía, la psicología, la ética, la fisiología y la sociología (Shuare, 2019)⁵.

Todo este proceso básico de elaboración y procesamiento del cerebro lo intentó explicar también Comenio (1630) (1983) en su Didáctica Magna.

En ese análisis hipotético por medio de analogías, se puede apreciar cómo un sujeto religioso, convencido del creacionismo, asume que el cerebro, el entendimiento, el pensamiento y lo que se recibe por medio de la enseñanza, operan en una unidad inseparable, tal y como tres siglos después, hablarán de una u otra forma, Setchenov, Vvendisky, Ujtomski (1945) y Bernstein (1967), por medio de sus aportes acerca

⁵ Material producido para el Curso en la USP-EACH, que se prepara para su próxima publicación en un eBook por la Editorial de dicha Universidad.

del papel de la dominante y la fisiología de la actividad o fisiología psicológica, respectivamente.

Es por esto que lo pedagógico y en especial lo que se comienza a hacer a partir de los siglos XVI, XVII y XIII para contrarrestar el daño al desarrollo humano que producen los déficits biológicos, son un magnífico ejemplo práctico de que toda esa teoría trabajada por los mencionados autores, es digna de ser estudiada, redescubierta y comprendida crítica y científicamente, para superar definitivamente, los "residuos del biologismo" que aun existe.

Para Comenio que no puede hablar todavía en los términos científicos de los autores mencionados, el procesamiento del cerebro, del entendimiento y el de la vida real del sujeto, coexisten y funcionan como en una analogía con la cera, que es maleable y en ella se impregna lo que el sujeto hace e incluso, se modulan o se forman las imágenes de las cosas y los hechos de la vida concreta y real que vive el ser humano. Para este autor no es, como ocurre en los seres vivos anteriores, donde el "cerebro", son los que producen directamente, el hacer de estos; sino, que es al revés, es el hacer y las acciones que produce el sujeto en su lucha por la subsistencia y la adaptación activa, la que moldea el cerebro, el entendimiento y el pensamiento en este nuevo ser vivo. (Espinoza, 1958; Comenio, 1983; Luria, 1974, 1979, 1981; Leontiev, 1981; Vygotski, 1987, 1991).

Estos hechos históricos y científicos, fueron estudiados y analizados en los seminarios derivados del curso realizado con la Dra. Marta Shuare además, del análisis del Enigma de Gaspar Hauser y los niños que se han criado en estrecha relación y convivencia con lobos, perros y aves. La idea esencial, era mostrar que lo que procesan los mecanismos fisiológicos son lo contenidos y medios que el sujeto recibe a través de la labor educativa y de la enseñanza que promueve los aprendizajes y los correspondientes desarrollos psíquicos y no, por medio de lo que segregá o produce lo fisiológico como afirma el biologismo y sus residuos en la actualidad.

Todo este análisis, pienso que le hizo al Profesor y filósofo italiano Mario Alighiero Manacorda, emitir uno de los juicios más significativos e importantes sobre el legado que estamos valorando

delenfoque histórico cultural en el contexto de la educación, cuando señaló:

(...) la humanización de la pedagogía, su liberación de la cautividad biológica para convertirse en humana e histórica: éste es el centro y la inspiración fundamental de la obra de Vygotski (Manacorda, 1980, p. 46-57).

De este tercer legado del enfoque histórico cultural, el antibiologismo, se desprende otro que no solo tiene que ver con lo psicológico, sino con el papel que desempeñan la pedagogía, la lingüística y la sociología en el desarrollo psíquico humano. Me refiero, a que es la buena educación y no cualquiera otra, la que produce este desarrollo en su más plena expresión (Vygotski, 1988, 1993, 1996).

Cuando Vygotski habla de este tipo de educación, insiste en muchas partes de su obra, que es aquella que, según mi interpretación, trabaja para organizar las ayudas y el modelar de forma didáctica los contenidos y medios culturales según la manera en que se han de producir los aprendizajes y el desarrollo específicamente humano correspondiente. Destacando, que el niño no aprende por descubrimientos y repeticiones (Vygotski, Luria, 2007), sino que lo que le permite a éste aprender y desarrollarse es el hacer y el reproducir en la práctica de su educación, de la vida real y concreta, la creación de esos contenidos y medios de la cultura dados históricamente (Comenio, 1983; Pestalozzi, 1986a, 1986b; Montessori, 2003; Vygotski, 2001, 1988, 1993, 1996; Elkonin, 1976, 1994, 2017; Davidov, 1988, 1991).

Se apoya este enfoque en el planteamiento que hace Espinoza (1958) para la filosofía, que es a partir de las acciones, que se produce la formación y desarrollo del pensamiento y de hecho del resto de las funciones psíquicas superiores (Illienkov, 1977). O, como también llegan a concebir Baldwin y Piaget, lo que refirma Vygotski, que: las disputas o discusiones infantiles contribuyen a la formación del pensamiento de los niños (Vygotski, 1993).

Este es el legado que le hace decir a Manacorda, que la explicación del enfoque histórico cultural libera al sujeto de la determinación ciega, rígida y fatal de lo biológico y por medio de la educación y organización de los contenidos de la cultural de acuerdo con las leyes propias del desarrollo humano, se consiguen promover diversos tipos

de desarrollo más específicamente humanos. De esta forma, las personas tienen la posibilidad de alcanzar la formación más plena e integral, incluyendo las que logran las personas con déficit biológico por medio de los procesos de corrección y compensación.

Forma parte de este legado, la explicación del proceso de la educación que se desarrolla, por medio del concepto de zona de desarrollo próximo o más próximo, que sin dudas resume o sintetiza toda la concepción y explicación del proceso educativo que incluye a la enseñanza, el aprendizaje y el desarrollo del escolar en una unidad indivisible; al papel del educador y del estudiante y, que son ambos, los que deben tener un papel activo en el proceso y, por último, el papel de las inminentes ayudas que son necesarias solo cuando el sujeto las necesita y solicita, tal y como las emplean sistemas educativos de avanzada en el mundo de hoy. (Vygotski, 1988, 1993, 1996; Stevenson, Stigler, 1992).

En la explicación de la zona de desarrollo Vygotski insiste, en el papel concreto de los adultos, familiares, coetáneos y maestros; en las ayudas que han de brindar, que han de ser dadas suave e imperceptiblemente, de manera tal que el sujeto vivencie, perciba y, llegue a sentir su labor y papel como esencial, en el proceso de producción de conocimientos. De esta manera, el estudiante, consigue formar una determinada motivación, cada vez más consciente, que le permita realizar la actividad de estudio y los aprendizajes que necesita y desea. Incluso, tal y como trabajaron Markova y Davidov, (Lompcher, Markova, Davidov, 1987), que de manera más conscientes el escolar también estudie para dominar los métodos y procedimientos de aprender por sí mismo, labor y desarrollo cumbre de la educación, según los autores mencionados.

Para Vygotski (1988, 1993, 1996), las ayudas no comienzan con la demostración de lo que se tiene que hacer, sino que deben brindarse de forma tal que el sujeto que aprende, tenga que hacer todo el esfuerzo necesario a partir del desarrollo real que posee y lo que se encuentra en proceso de formación, llegando a realizar, lo más independiente posible, la tarea que debe de resolver. Esta es una forma de defender el papel activo del sujeto, de lo que este pueda hacer por sí mismo, la formación de una motivación más efectiva y una mayor seguridad en sus inmensas posibilidades de llegar a tener un mejor aprendizaje y desarrollo. En definitiva, de hacer consciente los

procesos del estudio, situación social del desarrollo de la edad escolar (Vygotski, 1993).

Para el pensamiento histórico cultural de Vygotski, tanto el maestro como el estudiante deben de tener un papel activo. Creo que es imprescindible develar explícitamente esta intención, que está explicada, por primera vez, en el libro, *Psicología Pedagógica*. Un curso breve, y que luego también trata en la Introducción que Vygotski escribe al libro de Thorndike y en *Pensamiento y lenguaje* (Vygotski, 1991, 1993, 2001). Lo relevante de esto, es que también en el pensamiento educacional de países de Asia, se asume este principio esencial de lo que es la educación y la enseñanza capaz de producir los mejores aprendizajes y desarrollos (Stevenson, Stigler, 1992).

Esta concepción y legado tiene su consolidación, cuando Vygotski en su explicación de la zona, insiste en que el propósito esencial del proceso de brindar las ayudas es que el estudiante consiga realizar de forma independiente lo que antes hacía con ayudas (Vygotski, 1988, 1993, 1996).

Aunque ya se mencionó, otro legado que se encuentra implícito en estos que vengo, insistiendo, es aquel que asume la integralidad y dinámica del funcionamiento de los procesos o funciones psíquicas superiores. Esto no es más que una expresión de cómo se produce cualquier tipo de formación en la naturaleza, lo que hace que el pensamiento dialéctico, enuncie la ley general de que todo se encuentra y se produce como consecuencia en un movimiento constante y concatenado o interrelacionado, como también postula el enfoque de la complejidad.

Este legado para los cubanos se relaciona con lo que llegó a defender el maestro José de la Luz y Caballero, en el siglo XIX, cuando señaló y puso en práctica: que no hay nada que desarrolle mejor al estudiante que cuando la memoria se trabaja conjuntamente con el pensamiento, lo que produce según sus propias palabras: “un desarrollo robusto” de estas facultades, como se les decía entonces a los procesos o funciones psíquicas superiores (Luz y Caballero, 2001).

Otro contenido, sin precedente en la obra de Vygotski, que se constituye a mi juicio en un legado, aun por desarrollar, es el intento de explicar y teorizar sobre la manera en la que el sujeto interioriza y se apropiá de los contenidos de lo social y de los medios de la cultura que son históricos y no evolutivos, trasmitiéndose a través de la

educación y de las relaciones sociales (la actividad y la comunicación que a partir de ellas se conforman).

La interrogación que me lleva a denominar este proceso, es: ¿cómo el sujeto constituye en subjetividad, ideal o psicológico, los contenidos objetivos y materiales, lo social y lo cultural, de su vida concreta o real, que le produce su drama humano? (Politzer, 1964, 1965; Wallon, 1965; Bleger, 1963, 1965; Pichón Rivière, 1981, 1995; Vygotski, 1991, 1996).

Sin dudas, esto también fue un propósito de James, Baldwin y Piaget entre otros, pero a mi juicio, la mejor explicación hasta ahora, aunque sigue estando inconclusa, es la que partiendo de lo señalado críticamente por autores como Politzer y Wallon, contiene el enfoque histórico cultural a propuesta de Vygotski.

Los autores que mencioné primero, pienso que no pudieron asumir plena e integralmente sus propósitos, como si lo hacen los últimos, porque sus concepciones continúan siendo abstraccionistas, reduccionistas y fragmentarias, o sea, falta de una comprensión sobre la integralidad que se produce en el desarrollo humano a partir de los contenidos y medios de la cultura en el conjunto de la vida concreta y real en la que vive el sujeto.

La idea de la existencia de una energía para explicar la constitución de la subjetividad, en Dewey y Spearman, por ejemplo, es otro intento para comprender este complejo problema de lo psicológico, el proceso de formación de la Gestalt es otra manera de aproximarse a este problema de hacer subjetivo lo objetivo y material.

La explicación de Piaget a partir del concepto de la acomodación y la asimilación de las estructuras y los contenidos cognitivos es una brillante aproximación a esta explicación, que Vygotski seguro que la tuvo en cuenta, de una u otra forma, pero desde otra concepción y método general, que le permitió producir una explicación integral, por medio de las críticas y las correcciones correspondientes, permitiéndole producir una nueva hipótesis, una nueva explicación para las ciencias psicológicas.

En mi libro titulado *La Persona en el Enfoque Histórico Cultural* (Arias Beatón, 2005a), haciendo alusión a que cuando Vygotski aun en 1930, no tenía una explicación de cómo se produce de manera integral la interiorización de los contenidos de la cultura, insistí en que él ya valoraba que este proceso tenía su origen y fuente en las diferentes formas de organización de las relaciones sociales, de la educación, del drama del desarrollo. También señalé que, en su trabajo inconcluso, de

la Historia de las Funciones Psíquicas Superiores (1930), explica este proceso, utilizando una analogía con lo que ocurre en la alimentación diciendo que, la interiorización del material que genera lo psíquico, se produce como en la alimentación del ser humano. A sabiendas que solo es una analogía y que en realidad este proceso es mucho más complejo y particular, sigue buscando hasta encontrar su hipótesis definitiva en el año 33 del siglo pasado, solo unos meses antes de morir (Vygotski, 1987, 1996).

Esta explicación, que aun necesita de estudios y precisiones, es la relacionada con los conceptos y explicaciones, contenidas en la llamada ley de la Situación Social del Desarrollo o la Dinámica del Desarrollo, me refiero al papel de la vivencia en ella y la atribución de sentidos a aquellos hechos o situación que le llegan al sujeto, por medio de las relaciones sociales (actividad y comunicación)⁶ (Arias Beatón, 2005a, Arias Beatón 2017b, Fariñas, Calejon 2017).

Desde mi interpretación, la gran diferencia entre la hipótesis de Vygotski y la de una energía inmanente de Dewey, Spearman, una Gestalt que ocurre de pronto o como producto de procesos internos y ahístóricos o la asimilación y la acomodación de Piaget, que también se producen por cuenta de los procesos internos, aunque en este se observa un papel más importante de las interacciones con los adultos; es que para Vygotski, hay una constante y sistemática interdeterminación mediada, causal entre los procesos interpersonales e intrapersonales.

Vygotski, convierten en aspectos constituyentes, o sea, en determinantes mediados, reales e históricamente establecidos, a aquellos procesos que producen experiencias que son vividas a lo interno del sujeto (lo intrapersonal) a partir de la relación que el propio sujeto establece emocional y cognitivamente por medio de lo interpersonal y lo intrapersonal conformado hasta ese momento.

Son estos contenidos, estas relaciones, y las experiencias que vive el sujeto, que son vivenciadas, vividas según toda la subjetividad acumulada hasta ese momento en la formación de la personalidad y, la atribución de sentidos que él le otorga; las que impactan y producen en el sujeto, la propia formación y desarrollo psíquico correspondiente

⁶ Esta insistencia en mis trabajos y esta posible explicación de la relación entre estas dos leyes es lo que considero una de mis contribuciones a la producción de los contenidos explicativos de lo histórico cultural y que incluye lo que rusos, cubanos y brasileños han dicho sobre esto.

en cada momento histórico individual e intrapersonal del proceso de formación y desarrollo constante.

Las vivencias se producen de acuerdo con el contenido psicológico ya constituido en la persona, por este mismo proceso en momentos anteriores y desde el mismo nacimiento y, van configurando lo intrapersonal o psicológico interno de una naturaleza social y cultural a partir de lo que ya trae constituido desde lo biológico y que se va trocando paulatinamente. Por eso, la máxima de que las funciones psíquicas naturales se transforman en funciones psíquicas superiores de naturaleza social y cultural (Vygotski, 1987, 1996).

Este es el proceso que algún día tendrán que tener en cuenta, definitivamente los maestros, los familiares y los sistemas de educación, para que existan verdaderos aprendizajes significativos y personales positivos, produciéndose entonces, estos procesos vivenciales y la atribución de sentidos que permitan la posible formación de aquello que persiguió Vygotski y nos dejó inconcluso en su trabajo sobre la teoría de las emociones y los afectos, donde tal y como dijo Espinoza, sostiene que lo emocional y lo afectivo es la condición esencial para producir las disposiciones del sujeto al hacer y producir en beneficio propio, el desarrollo social y cultural que necesita la naturaleza y la sociedad en pro del propio ser humano.

Solo conseguiremos este legado silencioso cuando con la educación que se desarrolle se pueda evitar que exista un gran número de escolares que no aprenden, o aprenden defectuosamente, fracasando en sus intentos de cursar los estudios más elementales en la educación pública de hoy. Esto podemos decirlo porque una inadecuada organización y orientación de la labor educativa, no produce, las experiencias y vivencias que permitan que el escolar atribuya los sentidos correspondientes para que se den los aprendizajes y los desarrollos que atañen.

Los estudios e investigaciones realizadas con mi tutoría, ilustran e indican el gran cúmulo de vivencias negativas que se producen en los escolares que no aprenden adecuadamente en las escuelas y el papel que sobre ellas ejercen las erráticas formas de educación y enseñanza (Arias Beatón, 2017b).

El sin número de situaciones y hechos inadecuados a la naturaleza humana, que se producen en la historia del sistema de relaciones sociales, de las actividades y la comunicación, desde la más temprana edad en estos sujetos en desarrollo, producen experiencias que son

vivenciadas de tal forma que deterioran o configuran contenidos negativos en el desarrollo de su subjetividad, que incluso pueden dañar los proceso de memorización, del lenguaje y del pensamiento, además de los efectos negativos que producen en el sistema de sus necesidades, motivos, intereses y el comportamiento en general en constante formación y las posibles alteraciones como consecuencia de dicha dinámica (Zamora, 2007; González, 2008; Rodríguez, 2011)⁷.

Los estados vivenciales llegan a ser tan fuertes para el sujeto en desarrollo, que pudieran constituirse en una de las causas del llamado estrés sostenido que según Ledoux (2001) puede producir alteraciones en la estructura celular del cerebro y su funcionamiento.

Otro elemento a destacar, empleando el estudio de lo que se produce en casos en los que el desarrollo pudiera estar alterado por posible daños cerebrales, se ha podido constatar que cuando el proceso educativo o el sistema de relaciones interpersonales se adecua a las características del sujeto en formación y se actúa de manera tal, que se garantice un proceso vivencial favorable a los propósitos de la educación y el desarrollo, el proceso de aprendizaje no se altera, ni tampoco se produce inadecuadamente la formación de los contenidos psicológicos del sujeto y, donde se suponía que se pudiera producir una dificultad específica de aprendizaje, una hiperactividad, una falta de atención y concentración, un fracaso escolar, no se producen, gracias a esa dinámica más ajustada a las exigencias de la educación y a las posibilidades del sujeto (Zamora, 2007; Rodríguez, 2011).

En tercer lugar, el estudio y seguimiento, con mi supervisión, sobre la atención a escolares que han estado sometidos durante años a inadecuadas formas de educación y de enseñanza, se ha podido observar, cómo a medida que cambian los contenidos y formas de trabajar la educación y la enseñanza; las relaciones sociales con ellos, los actos, las acciones y definitivamente la actividad y las formas de comunicación, se van constituyendo vivencias de otros contenidos y signos, provocando cambios significativos de sentidos atribuidos por el sujeto a dicha labor educativa y a la escuela. Colateralmente se producen cambios significativos en su sistema de necesidades,

⁷ Lic. Elsa Cristina Rodríguez Bastó, Tesis de Diploma. La atención a escolares con problemas en el aprendizaje en la Ciudad Escolar 26 de Julio. Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 2011; Lic. Inti González Chardik. Tesis de Maestría Las dinámicas causales en los trastornos emocionales y de la conducta, Universidad de La Habana, 2008; Lic. Santa Nereida Zamora Suárez, Tesis de Maestría, Las dificultades y problemas en el aprendizaje escolar. Incidencia y dinámica causal, 2007.

motivos, emociones, sentimientos y comportamientos en general, que también modifican los contenidos del desarrollo de los procesos emocionales e intelectuales y, de nuevas y positivas vivencias garantizándose la atribución de mejores sentidos para el sujeto, a medida que se hace más organizada, sistemática y constante la labor educativa de calidad que produce nuevos y mejores aprendizajes y desarrollo (Zamora, 2007).

Resulta muy difícil en estos estudios determinar las causas primarias o secundarias en esta dinámica tan compleja y por eso preferimos denominar este proceso de dinámica causal (Arias, 2009), donde las causas están tanto en una dirección como en otra, tal y como se considera que éstas actúan en el modelo de la complejidad o de una buena y consecuente mediación dialéctica.

Para este modelo o esta hipótesis histórico cultural enunciada a partir de los presupuestos de Vygotski y trabajada por nosotros, la energía está, existe. Pero, la energía que mueve al sujeto en un sentido u otro, hacia su desarrollo, no es inmanente, no está dada de una vez y por todas, es un producto histórico cultural personal, es producida por la dinámica de la mediación entre los contenidos sociales y culturales, su organización y dirección y los contenidos que se han ido y se van constituyendo de forma subjetiva o espiritual, a lo interno del sujeto.

Por último, creo que se puede considerar como otro de los grandes aportes de lo histórico cultural y de Vygotski a la educación, sus hipótesis, que aun debemos seguir trabajando para precisar y depurar, de que las funciones o procesos psíquicas superiores, incluidos los emocionales que aun no se han estudiado plenamente, son producto de la cultura, de lo interpersonal, de un proceso de formación y desarrollo de la función simbólica y del signo, que también son de naturaleza social e histórica y no solo producto de un proceso biológico y evolutivo como se cree desde los tiempos en que surgió la lingüística como ciencia (Mounin, 1973; Saussure, 1973; Figueroa Esteva, 1986).

El hecho de que Vygotski sustente la idea de que las funciones o procesos psíquicos superiores o culturales se formen y desarrollen por el dominio y aprendizaje de los medios producidos por la cultura como el lenguaje, el dibujo, la escritura, el cálculo, es un ejemplo de la importancia de una educación basada en la apropiación de los contenidos esenciales de la cultura producida por la sociedad humana

y que todo este proceso concluya con la formación de los contenidos de la subjetividad o lo psíquico humano, el dominio de la propia conducta, la conciencia, y la personalidad (Vygotski, 1987, 1991).

Otro análisis esencial que complementa y de hecho refuerza éste de la naturaleza social y cultural de la educación, que produce y promueve el desarrollo integral y multilateral del ser humano, es la concepción optimista del proceso de formación y desarrollo por medio de los mecanismos de compensación cultural, en el caso de los escolares con algún tipo de déficit biológico. O sea, que incluso en estos escolares las dificultades biológicas no tienen porque explicar que se produzcan alteraciones en la formación y el desarrollo psicológico.

También han resultado contenidos esenciales para este Enfoque, aunque muy poco trabajados por las políticas y el hacer de la educación mundial y que nosotros los cubanos, tuvimos mas en cuenta son: la necesidad de crear una psicología propia del maestro que lo ayude a consolidar su concepción del desarrollo y de la educación, la noción amplia de la educación que ha de producirse en la familia, la escuela y la sociedad, la integralidad del desarrollo humano, la concepción de las actividades rectoras, las bases orientadoras del aprendizaje, el papel de la comunicación, la modelación gráfica y lingüística entre otros contenidos, los que han sido una guía para el proceso de introducción de estos conocimientos en las prácticas educacionales cubanas.

El enfoque histórico cultural y su explicación acerca de la naturaleza social y cultural del desarrollo psíquico humano, como hemos señalado se constituye en el conocimiento más acabado que existe hasta hoy, porque él es un producto de una sistematización crítica de todo lo existente en el saber de las ciencias psicológicas y pedagógicas conformadas hasta ese momento en que surgió, pero además, enriquecida con la labor científica realizada con el empleo del método materialista dialéctico e histórico, que parte de la vida concreta y real en la que se produce dicho desarrollo humano.

Por último, deseo señalar que la explicación del enfoque histórico cultural como ya mencioné, no obstante ser inconclusa, se constituye en los fundamentos, más acabados, integrales y ajustados a lo qué es y el cómo se produce el desarrollo psíquico humano y el papel de la educación y el aprendizaje en este proceso.

Resulta relevante en este sentido, su planteamiento esencial de que la naturaleza de este desarrollo es de carácter mediado y, de naturaleza

social y cultural. Que este se produce a partir de las condiciones sociales al nacer, dada la dependencia casi absoluta del recién nacido, hacia, una independencia y autonomía de la persona, pero de naturaleza social en la que se forma.

Que lo biológico, genético y fisiológico, es la base del procesamiento de todo lo social y cultural que recibe el sujeto en su vida real y concreta, esencialmente por medio de la educación en la familia, la escuela y la sociedad. Por eso, lo psíquico no es un producto directo o un epifenómeno generado por lo biológico, como señalan de diferentes maneras las psicologías tradicionales y clásicas sino, el complejo resultado de lo que recibe social y culturalmente el sujeto, organizado y dirigido de manera tal que produzca dicho desarrollo.

Que este análisis conceptual, hasta donde hemos podido constatar en el estudio y los múltiples debates realizados, es la columna vertebral de todos los fundamentos y explicaciones particulares del enfoque histórico cultural, no obstante, las diferentes apreciaciones que se pueden observar, como es propio de cualquier labor científica.

Nada científico se produce de una sola vez. Ninguna ciencia se consolida por una sola generación de científicos. Todo en este trabajo tiene como base la diversidad de criterios personales que se constituyen en las expresiones de las contradicciones que dicho proceso produce y que conducen al desarrollo de la ciencia en cuestión.

Los aspectos que hemos señalado como legado de lo histórico cultural a la psicología y a la educación presente y futura, desde Psicología del Arte y Psicología Pedagógica, un curso breve, hasta los estudios e investigaciones acerca de las etapas del desarrollo psíquico y de las emociones, poseen una coherencia, continuidad, estabilidad y búsqueda de la integralidad, extraordinariamente importante y esclarecedora del objeto que se estudiaba. Este trabajo realizado por aquel colectivo con la dirección de Vygotski, se constituye en las bases de la Psicología General que tenía como objetivo diseñar y producir Vygotski.

Por esta razón, me atreví a sugerir desde los años mediados de los 90, que era necesario realizar una estudio profundo e integral para hacer una sistematización crítica de toda la obra producida en los inicios y lo que hicieron los continuadores de manera más fragmentada y que no obstante señalarse la necesidad de esta sistematización, no la pudieron realizar. Ello permitiría integrar lo que

sea posible, completar o transformar lo que hubiera que cambiar, elaborar los nuevos problemas e hipótesis que nos permitirían continuar el desarrollo, ampliación y profundización de la explicación histórico cultural del desarrollo humano, en el marco de esa psicología general inconclusa que aun tenemos y mostrar, las ventajas que ella ya produce y puede llegar a producir en las prácticas de la psicología científica, si conseguimos alcanzar su mayor estructuración.

Hoy en día siento que hay más interés en estudiar el período estalinista y qué afectación este produjo en la obra de Vygotski, develar si éste era marxista o no, entre otros objetivos políticos e ideológicos, que trabajar en esta labor científica que le propuse tanto a los académicos rusos, como a la familia de Vygotski en los años 2005 y 2007. Creo que no le hacemos ningún honor a Vygotski, ni salvaguardamos su legado, mientras sigamos haciendo ver que él hubiera permitido una mutilación de sus concepciones y fundamentos marxista. Estoy completamente convencido que él éticamente no hubiese aceptado tal hecho, incluso a riesgo de su vida.

Pensando en la obra producida bajo la dirección y orientación de Vygotski en los inicios, por su coherencia y estabilidad en el empleo de sus fundamentos en los diferentes y múltiples trabajos producidos, poco tuvo influencia de la represión estalinismo. Sabemos que en ese período comenzó a producirse las diferencias propias de cualquier labor científica, la polémica entre Vygotski y Leontiev, sin embargo, esto no cambió nada en Vygotski acerca de sus fundamentos escritos después de iniciada dicha polémica. Incluso, y debemos decirlo con total transparencia, el documento que escribe Leontiev en el debate del grupo sobre el problema de la conciencia, que nos puede servir para cualquier trabajo de sistematización crítica sobre esa polémica, es a favor de lo que explica y piensa Vygotski (Arias Beatón, 2011).

En el debate final de este taller en la Sapienza, volví a insistir que los estudio del estalinismo se lo dejemos a los historiadores y políticos y que nos dediquemos al trabajo de esta sistematización crítica que propongo y hagamos de lo histórico cultural que está producido, de su diversidad y fragmentación, la psicología general que necesita nuestra ciencia, para que algún día, no lo creo muy lejano, la humanidad disponga de una teoría y efectos prácticos en condiciones, para que pueda servir de base al diseño, organización y realización de una

educación de verdadera calidad que merece el ser humana y que aun no posee.

Las condiciones de crisis económica, social y cultural que hoy vivimos, nos harán enfrentar muchos avatares, pero, las premisas y legado que sabemos que nos brinda el enfoque histórico cultural para producir las mejores transformaciones futuras y, las luchas y resistencias de los pueblos que sufren, nos insuflan el optimismo para conseguir trasmisir y hacer consciente todo este legado.

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⁸ Traducción de Dra. Marta Shuare.

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3. Expanding Cultural-Historical Theory in Digital Age. Semiotic Mediation and Multimodality

Juan-Daniel Ramirez

Introduction

The theme that I will intend to develop in this international colloquium about Lev S. Vygotskij in the XXI century has to do with the advances that could be expected from the historical-cultural theory for a time of great challenges in technologies, education, environment and in health.

These challenges lead to conflicting visions in the field of 'digital reality' and social networks, which are perceived by large sectors of the population between unconditional acceptance and absolute rejection. Both opposing visions push people in two opposite directions from each other. Many people are carried away by sometimes unbridled optimism, attracted by the power of communication in new gadgets (computers, tablets, cell phones, etc.) capable of breaking space-time barriers between individuals. Meanwhile others reject all kinds of change in relation to the world they have known since childhood. Although in a somewhat different sense from what Umberto Eco indicated, we are confronting the old controversy between apocalyptic and integrated.

It is inevitable that, regarding the contradiction we are facing, researcher is questioning the validity of their work paradigm in this new reality. The vast majority of experts, scientists and intellectuals who lead the development of the academy in the transit towards an uncertain future, were trained in the use of communication technologies inherited from the Gutenberg Age. It is natural that they have difficulties adapting to the new digital ecosystem. Beyond the difficulties of migrating from one technology to another, the people going through this transition have to assume the moral responsibility of ensuring that the

best of the knowledge from the previous age is not lost in the course of changes towards the future, towards a new age in which the digital could absorb or reject the world created on paper (Olson, 1998).

But this brief socio-historical reflection would be at the descriptive level of approaching many problems that we have to debate on this day. Along with this expansive approach oriented towards social history, we can also focus on the analysis of individual experience from an autobiographical level. At this level centered on my own life, in my personal experience, I would like to dedicate a short time to refer to the way in which I approached the theory to Vygotskij. Although the history of psychology is written with reference to paradigm shifts, the ways in which researchers become interested in a theorist or a school may diverge considerably between them. In some cases, the theory interests itself and, in others, the interest in the theory would be motivated by its practical involvement, by its projection in the world of life. But we can also find a convergence between 'knowing' and 'doing'. I would find myself in a convergence between both approaches.

During my time as a psychology student at the University of Barcelona in the early seventies I had two passions: the first was the study of Piaget's theory in a psychology faculty that offered a small but very interesting group of professors who had visited Geneva since the late sixties. While studying Piaget, a subjugating book by an author completely unknown in Spain accidentally fell into my hands, the author was Lev S. Vygotskij and the book *Thought and Language* (1973). During my studies I survived working as a Primary Education teacher in the new private schools created to meet the educational needs of a migrant working population from other regions of the country, displaced to an economically thriving city like Barcelona. During a semester I practiced as a teacher in a School for adult education that had a majority of illiterate students coming mostly from two of the poorest regions of the country: Extremadura and Andalusia. When I finally had the opportunity to start my academic career, both life experiences determined the start of my journey as a researcher: on the one hand, the academic experience that studying Piaget and Vygotskij had represented for me; and, on the other hand, the social experience with a group of immigrant workers who were struggling to acquire the education that they had been denied in their places of origin.

After my formative years, when I joined the University of Seville as a 'profesor no-numerario' (equivalent to teaching assistant), once I

finished my PhD, together with a group of students attracted by the works of Vygotskij and Luria, I began to study in depth those as well as other researchers involved in the theory that today is known as CHAT (Cultural Historical Activity Theory)¹. The creation of the Adult Education Program by the government of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, highly evaluated by UNESCO, offered us a magnificent opportunity to study the cognitive and discursive changes of people in the process of learning literacy. Over time, these classic themes of historical-cultural theory were joined by others more related to the development of personal identity and gender identity, since the women students (women represented the 90 percent of students in each classroom) made major changes in the development of their personality from an educational experience that was highly emancipatory due to the effects of Freire's pedagogy (Freire, 1975).

As you may understand, Alexander R. Luria's book, *The cognitive processes. A sociohistorical approach* in Spanish edition (Luria, 1980), became a very special text among the members of this group of researchers, both young and enthusiastic, including myself. Later, the results obtained in the expedition to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan recorded in the book of Luria, were followed by the studies of Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole, published in the book *Psychology of Literacy* (Scribner and Cole, 1981). As a paradox, both books were of more interest in the social sciences (sociology, anthropology or communication studies) than in Education or psychology.

My theoretical training in the cultural-historical domain was greatly expanded throughout my stay during the 1986-1987 academic year at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC) at the University of California, San Diego. Professor James V. Wertsch was for me a master who knew how to guide me in the complexity of this fertile research paradigm. With him I will always have a debt of gratitude. With this toolkit, together with the research field that motivated us intellectually and involved us socially and politically, the research group was formalized under the name of Laboratory of Human Activity (LAH).

¹ Among those students were Manuel de la Mata-Benítez, Mercedes Cubero-Pérez, José A. Sánchez-Medina, Javier Andrés Santamaría-Santigosa y María Jesús Cala. The team had the temporary collaboration of the researcher Emiliano S. Sánchez from the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, México.

I will simplify my CV as a researcher pointing out the following items:

My approach to Vygotskij was through, or mediated by, Alexander Luria as author and head of the expedition to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan which led to a better understanding of the role of culture, in general, and of the importance of orality in the media and the ways of thinking in these societies that, with all kinds of reservations, I will call traditional cultures.

The process of literacy became our object of investigation. Mastery of the written word (from both, the reading and the writing perspectives) expanded the capacity to generate meaning beyond oral discourse and the cultural forms of primary orality (Ong, 1998; Cole, 1981).

The concept of 'semiotic mediation' was enriched by alphabetic writing, an instrument that transformed the cultural and discursive forms of primary orality, giving rise to secondary orality. A *techné* invented in Greece during the 8th century BC and in continuous progression until the invention of the Gutenberg mobile type printing press (Goody, 1977; Ong, 1982; Olson, 1998; Ronchi, 1996).

The functions of egocentric speech and its transformation into internal speech were also recorded in the course of our observations of literacy students, when verifying the existence of considerable number of utterances performed in loud voice involved in the comprehension of written texts by the literacy students (Ramírez, 1994; Ramírez, Cubero, 1995; Cubero, Ramírez, 2005).

Dialogism was present in reading comprehension from the beginning of learning to read. As in speaking time in an oral conversation, when a reader understood a text and was affected by its meaning, she immediately began to comment on it (Ramírez, Sánchez-Medina, Santamaría, 1996). For literacy students at all levels, learning to read and write represented a kind of emotional experience (*perezhivanie*) that transcended cognitive development and reached emotional development, leading to a succession of transformative experiences (Valdés, Coll, Falsafi, 2016; Pugh, 2011). The findings showed the way female students spoke of their lives were consistent with some of the themes developed by Vygotskij in the *Problem of Environment* (Vygotskij, 1934/1994).

3.1. Between Gutenberg and the Digital Culture

The world has changed a lot since the times when my main dedication was studying cultural, cognitive and identity changes through a type of communication technology, literacy, which had more than two thousand years of development.

The digital age has incorporated questions that historical-cultural theory must answer. For this, the scholars will need the support of other paradigms and research fields. Research and intervention in literacy related practices make it necessary to update the Vygotskian concept of 'semiotic mediation' (Vygotskij, 1934/1993; Wertsch, 1985) in order to adapt it to new forms of textuality in which hybridization between various sign systems is the predominant feature (words, emoticons, images, music, etc.).

Since the 90s of the last century, information and communication technologies (ICTs), in addition to increasing interactivity between people, have also increased the capacity to generate information in different modalities (texts, images, music videos, etc.). A varied group of social scientists ranging from psychology and pedagogy to anthropology, sociology or communication, became The New London Group (NLG, 1996) with the main objective of developing a pedagogy based on multiliteracies, which would try to respond to the two great phenomena promoted by globalization: the exponential increase in migratory processes and the vertiginous changes in information and communication technologies.

At the present time we find new forms of textuality (multimedia, multimodality, transmedia, etc.) that challenge researchers framed in the historical-cultural paradigm into rethinking the role that digital culture plays in the conformation of lifeworld. If the sign is the means of representation and expression that connects the object with its meaning, communication technologies create the support or the material substance that fixes those signs, turning them into means to communicate and think. I think it is appropriate to speak of technology in the original sense of *techné* (Ronchi, 1996), of medium and tool that act as a support for the sign. The Greek concept of *techné* as well as the most popularized concept of "technology" in the present must lead us to think beyond the means we use every day. These terms that, in the field of communications, refer us to the computer and to the entire sequence of gadgets (tablets, smartphones, play stations, etc.) are not the

only ones. Other means in the past were also part of communication technologies such as calamus, style, pen or pencil, etc., as well as their complementary accessories (Sumerian tablet, papyrus, skin, paper, etc.) and, later, the mobile type printing press or the typewriter. All these media are technologies that have transformed and even "domesticated" oral communication (Goody, 1977). The rules of use that make them work, as well as the cognitive processes of their users, are also part of these *techné*, as prominent members of the Toronto School have demonstrated (Innis, 1951/1999; McLuhan, 1998; Goody, 1977; Ong, 1982; Havelock, 1996). A communication technology could be defined as the combination of the device, the way it works, and the user with the skills required to handle the device. Thus, we would be facing an ecosystem formed by the set of elements that interact between them to fulfill a certain function, in the case that concerns us, to communicate. If we understand experience (*perezhivanie*) in the Vygotskian sense as a unit to understand and explain the psyche, it is necessary to accept that many of these experiences take place in that techno-semiotic ecosystem within which migrants walk towards a new and fluid life-world. A world globalized by technology is the complement to a world globalized by mobility. People can connect with each other overcoming time and space limits; they can live in one part of the world and gather information and knowledge in another. But we already know all this, what we need to analyze is how these same people can orient themselves on their journeys (real and virtual) and relocate where they arrive.

These are questions that we have to ask ourselves today if we want to continue the project started by Vygotskij in a more complex world than he knew. Vygotskij tended to explain development by projecting the focus on higher mental functions, but the orientation in all these displacements (real or virtual) leads us to ask ourselves about other processes that he placed rather in the background. Perception and attention, without a doubt, acquire a relevant place in this new mobility.

3.2. Perception and Experience

Compared to the German Gestalt school, which conceived perception as something that remains stable throughout development, the Vygotskian approach involved the interrelation of perceptual processes with other functional systems: the sensorimotor system,

involved in orientation and movement, and emotions. Both of them would create the infrastructure on which the experience (*perezhivanie*) is raised. These two interrelated processes are responsible for the child's affective relationship with the environment. Life in society and the communication between individuals would complete the whole (Vygotskij, 1934/1994; Zaporozhets, 2003).

As Zaporozhets indicates to us:

"The effector components of perceptual acts, in the form of movements of the hand feeling an object or the eye tracing the contours of a perceived figure, play an important role in perceptual actions in the early stages. The function of such orienting-investigatory movements of receptor apparatuses is to examine the perceived object, to 'appropriate' (A.N. Leontiev) its characteristics, and to model its properties, so that a copy is made, that is, an adequate image of the object is formed" (Zaporozhets, 2003; p. 8).

The knowledge of objects is carried out on boys and girls through manipulation. The environment would be an ecosystem made up of the boy or girl, the object that he or she manipulates and explores (figure), the other objects that he pays no attention to (ground) and, also, the significant people who guide his gaze and stimulate his interest. In this complex environment, the experience that takes place is emotional from the beginning. As Vygotskij himself explains in one of his most enlightening pieces, "An emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e. that which is being experienced – an emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] is always related to something which is found outside the person – and on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this, i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in an emotional experience [*perezhivanie*]" (Vygotskij, 1934/1994; p. 342).

In order to expand historical-cultural theory into new fields of interest, I would like to refer to a theorist in landscape anthropology, Timothy Ingold, with whom, in my view, we can find similarities with the Vygotskian approach. Ingold's following statement in his book *The Perception of Environment* (2000) allows us to see the proximity between their respective approaches: "[...] my environment is the world as it exists and takes on meaning in relation to me, and in that sense, it came into existence and undergoes development with me and around me" (Ingold, 2000, p. 20). Vygotskij and Zaporozhets explained the

perception and experience of the object in the environment close to the young child, while Ingold is interested by the perception of the landscape, but the two Soviet researchers would accept that the environment is formed through the activities of the living being since they compose an indivisible totality (Ingold, 2000).

Furthermore, Ingold introduces a distinction that, as I hope to demonstrate, could be accepted by the historical-cultural paradigm without causing a forced synthesis between both paradigms. I refer to the distinction between 'environment' and 'nature' which "[...] corresponds to the difference in perspective between seeing ourselves as beings *within* a world and as beings *without* it" (Ingold, 2000, p. 20). We would be faced with a concept of nature that, as Ingold believes, is not only something external to humanity but also to history (Ingold, 2000). To reaffirm the opposition 'nature' *vs* 'environment' Ingold uses an example from his own biography that expresses the 'felt' relationship with the environment. When he was a boy, he accompanied his father, a botanist, by training on his walks in the countryside. The father pointed out the plants, fungi, lichens, etc., that were finding on their way. In addition to pointing out and sometimes touching them to know their texture, the father made him smell and even recognize their flavors. The walk was both a way of learning and a form of leisure, and it could be defined as 'learning by experience'.

The direct experience was also present in the ethnographic work of Professor Juan José Yoseff and his research team (UNAM) when observing the way in which children and teenagers from Tonalá, State of Jalisco, learned the rudiments of the pottery trade by observing their parents and uncles while they worked. At the same time, young apprentices play with clay trying to reproduce rudimentary figures of their choice (Yoseff, Pérez, C. G., Nava, B. G., 2013). Also in this case learning is a combination of training and leisure.

The young Ingold's landscape promenades with his father bear an extraordinary similarity to the *grand tour* of the Walbiri teenagers from Central Australia studied by Mervyn Meggit. As a part of his initiation the young Walbiri goes on a trip during two and three months accompanied by a guide (an uncle) and an elder brother. During the journey the young man learns about the flora and fauna of the places he visits and the topography of the country and, above all, the story about the ancestors who shaped the landscape (Dreaming). His gaze captures the lines of the hills or the large rocks that emerge from its surface in

which he can recognize the figure of an ancestor extended in a resting position. The grand tour is the path that he must travel to reach the 'revelation' from the world to which he belongs; world of which he must appropriate to make it his dwelling for the rest of his days. That world-dwelling, the place where the young man lived after his initiation, is not learned by the apprentice through the information processing of everything that surrounds him. Learning is a 'revelation', the result of the observer's multisensory involvement, immersed in his environment in which the act of perceiving is complemented by his movements in that environment and by the observations of the relatives who guide them (Ingold, 2000).

3.3. Sphere and Globe

After seeing the world from the habitat perspective, we find a new dichotomy between two possible visions when perceiving the world, that have been different from each other since the origins of Modernity. I am referring to Ingold's distinction between 'sphere' and 'globe'. The child who walks beside his father learning about plants, fungi, insects, etc., or the experiences acquired by the teenager Walbiri, do not differ much from the way hunter-gatherer people learn about their environments. The world for these nomads is a space around them that is flat as the savanna or rough as a landscape surrounded by hills. As far as the gaze reaches, they always meet the horizon line that they will recognize as a circle around them and will also feel the gaseous sphere that surrounds them.

The opposite term to the sphere is the globe. Earth as a planet is now a solid object that can be looked at from the outside. Earth is represented in the old globes that we can see from the Renaissance and that continued being present in the old schools of another time. It is the balloon that the astronaut sees from his capsule or when the planet is viewed in Google Earth. Likewise, when we try to locate a certain place on Google Maps, we do not see the entire globe, but we can infer its existence. In all these cases, the beholder's view is always an external gaze on a solid object.

The famous triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, painted on panel by Hieronymus Bosch (el Bosco) between 1490 and 1510 (Prado Museum), is known for representing an extraordinarily complex dreamworld, which makes it in the most beautiful and intriguing

painting by this Flemish artist. What is not so well known is the represented image on its external part, once the triptych is closed.

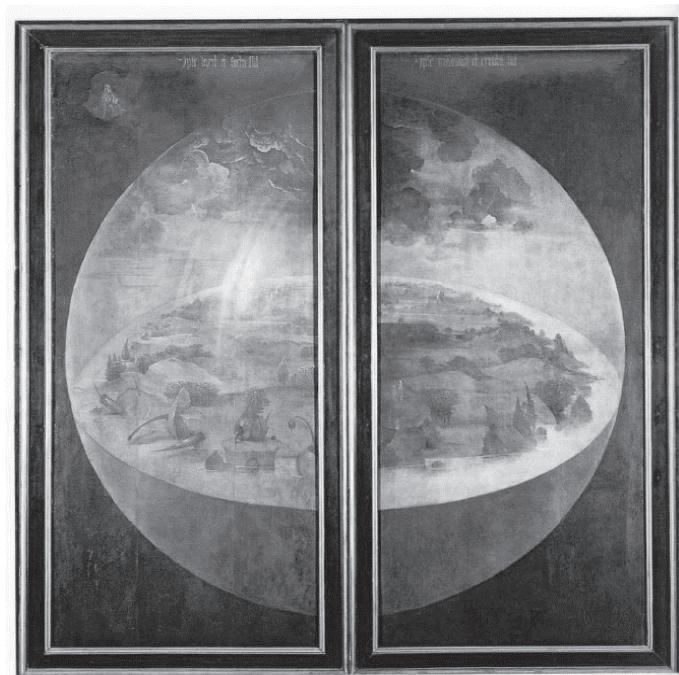


Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch. The exterior panels of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, oil on oak panels, 205.5 cm × 384.9 cm (81 in × 152 in), Museo del Prado, Madrid.

The world, represented on the surface of the two lateral tables that act as doors to protect the central table, contains a sphere divided into two hemispheres: the lower hemisphere is solid and the upper one is gaseous. A natural landscape is represented on the disc that establishes the border between the two substances, one solid (below) and the other gaseous (above). The vegetation that we can see is supported by the solid hemisphere, but it is kept alive thanks to the gaseous hemisphere. Perhaps this is the best allegory about life in the sphere, but it is not the only one, because, although more rudimentary, representations like this can be found in countless cultures, from the Inuit of Alaska and Northern Canada to the Greece of the times of Pythagoras, crosses the Middle Ages and reaches the Renaissance with Boethius and Marsilio Ficino (Ingold, 2000, p. 211).

Thus, the sphere represents the lived space, where the human being finds his dwelling. The globe as a solid object observable through technological devices (the astronaut capsule, Google Earth or GPS) and as such is more an object of knowledge than a part of the world in which life unfolds. Until the Digital Age, the science that best represented the knowledge of the globe was Geometry. Perhaps one of the first and best allegories on the science of geometry is found in the following engraving by Martens de Vos (1576–1613) and Egidius Sadeler, made in Antwerp at an indefinite time between the end of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Fig. 2). It was the time of the great navigations and the exploration of new worlds that shaped Modernity with all its contradictions. It was time for the development of a new episteme.



Fig. 2. Martens de Vos (1576–1613) & Egidius Sadeler II. *Geometry* (The Metropolitan Museum of New York.)

In figure 3 the two ways of living and representing the world developed by Ingold are contrasted.

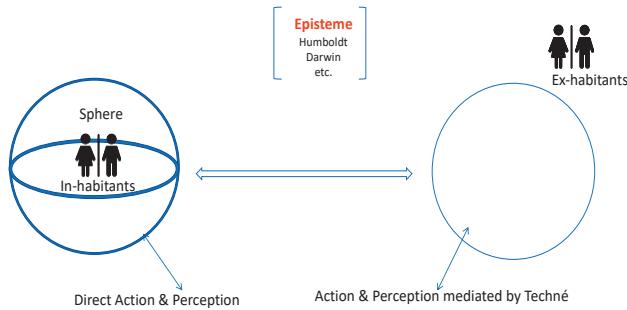


Fig.3. Sphera vs Globe. From Ingold's approach. Figure created by the author (Juan-Daniel Ramirez)

As has already been said when describing the sphere, the body of the inhabitant is the axis from which the space is organized: the horizon line around it and the sphere that surrounds it. The globe is represented as a solid object and the ex-habitant is outside of it. Actually, the meaning of the separation between the two is as follows: the ex-habitant can move on its surface, but it can also detach from it, being this separation either real (i.e., when traveling by plane) or virtual (when using Google Map). Our relationship with the habitat, our natural place, has perhaps become strange and abstract to us. However, it could happen that we are faced with forms of action and thought similar to the heterogeneity described by Peter Tulviste and continued by Mercedes Cubero. Hypothesis is based on the survival of rudimentary forms of thought and action that Vygotskij already defended in his book *Thought and Language* (Vygotskij, 1934/1993; Tulviste, 1991; Cubero, 1994). According to Tulviste, depending on the practice scenarios in which we operate, we decide to use rudimentary verbal thought processes or, on the contrary, elaborate processes. Thus, it could happen that we adopt a rudimentary way of feeling and perceiving the everyday world in the manner of the inhabitants or apply elaborate cognitive functions distancing ourselves from the everyday like the ex-habitants, to make the world an object of manipulation, an

object of knowledge. This is how Martens de Vos and Egidus Sadeler II show us in their engraving of the goddess of Geometry (see Fig. 3). The old geometry used the compass or the astrolabe for its purposes, while today's people use GPS and other digital technologies.

3.4. Experience and Multimodality

In the previous section we have faced a problem neglected by cultural studies: the way in which the world is made intelligible to us. As we position ourselves, we can adopt one of these two approaches: the spherical, 'centered' on our experiences in the surrounding world, and the global, 'off-centered' from that world and strive to perceive it from the outside, so that this world, in addition to being a perceived object, is an object of knowledge.

However, our approaches to any form of experience runs into another question: the *techné* from which we perceive, the instrument that mediates between the perceived object and the eye of the beholder. Earlier I mentioned that the theory of semiotic mediation could be defined as techno-semiotic mediation by the fact that the same object can be presented in different ways and, sometimes, combining different media. We can read a story and then see that same story projected in images or vice versa. The results in the reader or in the spectator will not be the same even when the essential content does not differ between one and another way of narrating. We can also see the poster of any movie that we have already seen before and evoke the plot in a holistic and/or syncretic way, since all the elements of that story are packed together in a confusing but emotionally intense way. The lived process reminds us of the way in which the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, describes the beginnings of a creative project:

"First of all, I take a passive attitude of the spirit; I know that if something is an aesthetic project, that project can be narrative, or it can be poetic or both at the same time. I can explain what happens to me by quoting Conrad. He says that he is a sailor who sees a spot on the horizon line, and he knows that spot is Africa. That is to say: that spot is a continent with jungles, rivers, men, mythologies and beasts, but what he sees is very little" (Borges, 1974-1975). I will add that what little is perceived of the African continent goes beyond perception itself, the spot on the horizon becomes a sign that bears a rich meaning, which condenses multiple images syncretically fused.

What Conrad intuits of what he can see from the deck of the ship is not the result of the reproductive memory but of his creative imagination that provides him with the semiotic materials with which he can write about Africa (i.e., *Heart of Darkness*) and develop a text that, over time, his readers and critics have considered a work of art. His work, the result of his literary skills, became a shared property between him, as an author, and his readers if, following Vygotskij, we accept that Art is the "social technique of feeling" (Vygotskij, 1925/1972, p. 19). Both, author and reader, found themselves in the text and lived similar emotional experiences (*perezhivania*), which we can rightly name aesthetic experiences.

The steps to reach the aesthetic dimension of the experience would be the following:

First, "vividness of the imagination". As Vygotskij states following Ribot: "The richer the human experience, the more material is available to the imagination. " (Vygotskij, 1930/2007, p. 30). Second, "ability to feel through others", since, in addition to their own experiences, it is also possible to be guided by the experiences of others. The imagination allows, "to be able to conceive from other people's stories and descriptions what has not been experienced personally and directly" (id., p. 32). And, finally, "being able to understand the poetic and narrative works of a culture", such as poetry, fables, novels, cinema, etc. When these requirements are met, the experiences will be aesthetic because the emotions become intelligent and, instead of clenching the fist or reacting with anger to a tragic, violent or unfortunate story, these primary reactions are sublimated, "they are resolved mainly in images of fantasy" (Vygotskij, 1925/1972, p. 260).

Beyond the Vygotskian vision of the development of fantasy and creative imagination, it is important to remember that his doctoral dissertation and later his 1925 book focuses on the work of art. This is both the object and the framework in which two sensibilities meet: artist and spectator. However, it could also make a detour and approach the study of the aesthetic experience from other works that have not received the category of work of art but can also promote some kind of aesthetic emotion in those who contemplate them. This path was explored by John Dewey in the 1930s in a book full of ideas and suggestions, *Art as Experience* (1934/1980), a work that, in addition to rethinking aesthetics from Pragmatism in recent years (Shusterman, 2000),

allows us to expand the historical-cultural paradigm beyond the current limits.

Both theorists would agree that aesthetic reactions are the result of activity around the contemplated object by the beholder which involves both mind and body. Vygotskij would accept Dewey's comment on Coleridge that aesthetic feeling is not a final stage of contemplation but a process of transit that reaches its culmination. In the words of the poet: "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself." (quoted by Dewey, 1934/1980, p. 5). Most likely, the art psychologist would have accepted the pragmatist philosopher's criticism of elitism that the dominant groups impose on all kinds of works, deciding which work should be considered artistic and which should not.

In moments of nationalist effervescence and colonial expansion, all countries have used the arts as a demonstration of symbolic power, a trend that has continued from the beginning of Globalization until today. An object taken out of its context and placed on a wall or the showcase of a museum, loses its function and the meaning for which it was created and becomes an object of admiration, of worship. With the growth of capitalism in the course of modernity, museums became the new cathedrals for objects of worship separated from everyday life as if they had ceased to be part of the native and the spontaneous culture that created them.

But the aesthetic feeling is not exclusive to the esthete, the member of a class or a caste educated to contemplate beauty but is a privilege of the 'living creature'. When a living being loses its adjustment with the environment to which it belongs, emotion is the conscious sign of rupture. However, overcoming the break, restoring the lost balance with the environment promotes a higher emotion. In Dewey's words:

"Because the actual world, that in which we live, is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and re-unions, the experience of a living creature is capable of aesthetic quality. The live being recurrently loses and re-establishes equilibrium with his surroundings. The moment of passage from disturbance into harmony is that of intensest life. In a finished world, sleep and waking could not be distinguished. In one wholly perturbed, conditions could not even be struggled with. In a world made after the pattern of ours, moments of fulfilment

punctuate experience with rhythmically enjoyed intervals" (Dewey, 1934/1980, p., p. 17).

Deweyian's approach to aesthetic experience has an evolutionary origin since it is not something that happens only in the human being as a species but in the live creature. But, as previously noted, human beings react sentimentally and aesthetically to many stimuli that are not encoded as works of art, as in Dewey's time they were, for example, movies, jazz music, love stories, newspaper accounts of murders, etc., and, in the present, they would be manga comics, reggaeton, fantastic cinema, etc. That is the *zeitgeist* from the 20th century to today, time in which three simultaneous processes acquired relevance: the great changes in communication technologies, the implantation and development of popculture, and the processes of cultural hybridization associated with the great migratory movements (García Canclini, 2003).

3.5. Some Final Comments

My career as a researcher began with the study of adult literacy, but my interest in literacy as a civilization process has continued throughout my academic life. Vygotskij and Luria, but also Cole and Wertsch, as well as my colleagues at LAH, helped me walk the long and winding road. However, we are now in another moment in which alphabetic writing has strong competitors and I am not referring to the syllabic writing of the Semitic languages nor to the Chinese ideograms. The new challenges are in the mediation systems associated with the digital culture. 'Multimodality' is the new term incorporated into the digital ecosystem that can help us clear a territory that, for now, is more an urban jungle than an ecosystem as such. Within its meaning we can maintain literacy as we know it, and at the same time establish collaboration channels with other forms of information and knowledge production (text, images, videos, music, etc.).

However, my way of understanding multimodality is relatively different from the approach of semiologists like Kress, van Leewen, and other creators of social semiotics and multimodal analysis (Kress, 2010; van Leewen, Jewit, 2001). While considering the analytical capacity of this methodology to study sign systems, our approach focused on student activity. In the Workshop of Multimodal Writing (formerly

Multimodal Workshop of Social Sciences) of the Pablo de Olavide University at Seville (Spain), students carry out an activity consisting of choosing images made by themselves (i.e., photographs taken on their smartphones, camera, etc.) to later write texts inspired by those same images (Ramirez, Hernández, Figueroa, Aillon, 2018). These texts, which are strictly bimodal (image + word), were inserted in Flickr social network and later in the defunct Google+, so that each student's work could be seen and commented on by other classmates. Since our students were from areas such as social work, social education or sociology, we wanted them to learn to observe and explore their everyday world and thus develop their 'sociological imagination' (Wright Mills, 1959/2004).

A good strategy for teaching social sciences is to use images as a way to record events which will serve as study material. For the visual anthropologist Malcom Collier, a photograph not only contains what the photographer wanted to record (figure), but also, in the field of vision recorded by the lens (ground), there are elements of interest to analyze when the image is viewed in detail. Malcolm Collier expressed in the following terms the complexity of photography as research material for cultural studies: "[...] the content of the visual image is rarely shaped only by the constructive influences of recorders and subjects, a fact reflected in the frequent discovery of previously unseen phenomena and relationships in the process of visual analysis" (Collier, 2004; p. 35). Following Collier, it could be said that students have a task to develop in two stages: a first moment for action (registering an event) and a second moment for reflection and study of the registered event and other aspects within the framework of photography. This second stage of the task is reflected in the writing of a text that can be descriptive, argumentative or narrative. In this way the writing is finally incorporated into a bimodal text.

However, the description of the tasks developed within the framework of the Multimodal Writing Workshop would not be completed without incorporating the aesthetic as an expansion of the emotional experience itself.

The activities of the Workshop allow us to expand and educate perception by taking learning from school and placing it also in everyday life, in the various spheres that surround the life of each individual, or in the experiences lived in the global world (ie, trips to other countries, ERASMUS stays, etc.). But there are a couple of questions that must be

answered. What happens to those experiences worked through two different semiotic modalities (image + words)? Is it possible to promote some kind of aesthetic feeling with this type of activities? The answer can be given by who from literature has traveled both ways. In all the novels of the German writer W.G. Sebald (1944-2001) the images accompany the words, producing a very interesting hybridization between the two (Sebald, 2006, 2008, 2019). As he expressed in a posthumous TV interviews (W.G. Sebald, 2014), the photographs are like nomads, they are condemned to be lost and to be found by their owners or re-found by strangers from another generation and sometimes from other places. When Sebald found a photograph of interest to him, the emotions and feelings, the questions that the aging image caused him, etc., prompted him to write. The aesthetic experience arose, first, in him as an author and, later, in his readers. Once again ... an encounter: the triad formed by author, text and reader.

But since the invention of the smartphone, photography has changed its role due to the urgent need to photograph everything that people live in every moment, until the boundaries between moments disappear. It has gone from the nomadic object, as Sebald said, to a stream of images that is difficult to recover. In order to achieve pedagogical use of digital photography it was necessary to make the activity as slow as possible: first, scrutinize the image and, later, develop a written text. In this way the activity will resemble the journey in the sense of Coleridge, to which I referred earlier. This strategy served to promote an intense experience (*perezhivanie*) that, at the same time, was an aesthetic experience.

To end this conference, I would like to express my thanks once again to the Università degli Studi di Roma, La Sapienza, and especially the professors Maria Serena Veggetti and Guido Benvenuto for offering me the opportunity to express my ideas and the opportunity to debate with a group of eminent colleagues about the work of Lev S. Vygotskij and its projection in the future.

Personally, I consider this theorist not only to be included among the great figures of psychology, but also of semiotics and social sciences, in general. It is from this complexity that Vygotskij has to be studied and also understood as a human being immersed in a historical epoch marked by tragedy. But, most importantly for me, I see in him the master who has been my guide to understand human cognition overcoming the dominant solipsism of the academic world in

which I was trained as a psychologist. I have tried to point out possible avenues of expansion to some of his most prominent ideas. I have tried to open a way for a better understanding of perception, extending its study from the close environments that Vygotskij masterfully described in *The Problems of Environment* to the ecosystems that condition human life in a globalized world. I also believe that for a better understanding of the aesthetic experience, it is important to complement the vision of our admired theorist with that of his contemporary, the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. I think that in both there are important links to explain a concept of the relevance of *perezhivanie* and its projection in the context of the Aesthetics. These 'expansions' help to find the way to conceive communication within the framework of the new digital culture in which the literacy that we can call 'classical' finds its place and coexistence with other modalities of information and knowledge.

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4. How have educational and instructional activities to be inclusive

M.SerenaVeggetti

4.1. Consciousness in the Historical-cultural psychology and pedagogy

Psychologists and pedagogists may agree on the statement, that Vygotskij -founding the historical cultural approach in psychology - presented the topic of consciousness as prioritarian since his first contribution, (1925), identifying it as the main problem of human behaviour.

Defining consciousness, he wrote (Vygotskij,1925, it.trans., p.67): "Human behaviour and human working activity stem from a disseminated use of the experiences of the previous generations, which are not genetically transmitted from father to child."

So is the component of human behaviour *historical* in its essence. This quality generates, indeed, a discontinuity in the genetic developmental process, between the physiological functioning of all living organisms and the attaining of higher psychological forms of human behaviour.

Vygotsky uses metaphors. So, he figures out the subjective experiences, at the moment the human beings cross the threshold of consciousness as a crowd of many thousand peoples in panic, urging before a big building, with very narrow outdoors. From these doors only a few of them will cross the limit, the others will perish (*ibid.*, p.71).

To him, consciousness is the result of an analogous catastrophic struggle, since, in adapting to the outer world, man not only and not simply responds to stimuli but creates by himself new events and stimuli. Many of the latter based, as he explains, on the knowledge of others and on the experience of the previous generations. At the

foundation of knowledge and as a tool for the transmission of this historical experience, language is located. The former not only intended as verbal language but the entire elaboration of a system of signs for coping (identifying and communicating) meaningful aspects of the lived experiences. He describes very clearly and effectively through exemples from literature the genesis of the meaningful aspects (1934, ch. 7), as precise elaboration of the individual. The joint experience of communication between Kitty and Lewin in the Tolstoyan romance Anna Karenina may avoid using an extended form of language. The same happens in all the narrow settings of professionals who share joint tasks or in every-day life when a group of people share a common aim (i.g. the coming of a bus at the bus stop, when if somebody says "Comes", or, "coming" all understand that the bus is coming).

So Vygotskij considered the social-historical component of consciousness through social experience, tied to language, as its engine. To him communication of the experienced social sensations and perceptual, emotional, cognitive events through the neuronal paths brings the subject to the fixation of these in a registered form of entities, acquired in the memory of humans. In the cases of native deaf-and-dumb children, to use the author's words, in the form of a naturally predisposed experiment, we have direct evidence, of parallel running the social consciousness and the acquisition of language (Vygotskij, 1925, it.transl.p.87).

In his clinical writings about "Defectology" he defined social experience as the unavoidable antecedent of human consciousness, thus giving an explanation for the common way, through which consciousness is generated in the child, suppose he is sharing - and only if this is provided - the experience with speaking people. (Vygotskij, Collected works, vol. 2,1993).

The social experience generates the opportunity and the connected intention, the willing to communicate with the others, and consequently, by means of the exposure from the earlier age to a specific language, gives way to the linguistic communication in ontogenesys.

The first form of registering experience is not immediately linguistic but semiotic, being based upon the personal meaning of the named events. We find somehow a previous form of translation of the experiences into meaningful contents which are symbols.

The difficult dissemination of the Vygotskyan writings abroad and in his soviet milieu, about which the seminal contribution of Luciano

Mecacci (see further this volume) gives an account, has brought about a sort of slow and gradual acquaintance to the position of this author. Nonetheless concerning language as a system of tools he was clear from the very beginning of his formulation. This is demonstrated by the variety of disciplinary aspects that his theorizing involves, documented by very different topics he wrote about, from: Vygotskij and Luria (1930), where we find a comparative analysis of primates, child, civilized man, to Vygotskij (1930) on the emotions , and the groundbreaking book of 1931/60, with the delineation of the humanization of higher psychological functions, to the Vygotskij (1930), with the analysis of the historical meaning of the crisis in psychology, unpublished till 1982 (see Mecacci, 2017) and others too numerous to mention here.

«Any physical handicap, be it deafness, blindness or inherent mental retardation, not only changes a person's attitude toward the world, but first and foremost affects his relationship with people. Any physical defect, or flaw, is conceived as a behavioural abnormality. Even within his or her family, a deaf or blind child is first of all a special child toward whom one develops an exclusive, unusual attitude, which is different from that toward other children» (Vygotskij, 1993, p.76-77). Moreover: «... according to scientific pedagogical literature and common view, -writes the A. - questions regarding handicapped children have up until now been posed and decided as mainly a biological problem...More simply speaking, from both, the psychological and pedagogical points of view the question has commonly be posed in crude physical and medical terms. A physical handicap has been analyzed and compensated for as just that, a handicap».

But to him a scientifical consideration of a biological compensation for a physical handicap has to take into account that: «When observing sensations in handicapped children, G.Ja. Troshin noted that the common pedagogical view greatly over exaggerates the primary, fundamental significance of the sensory organs. Preservation of the sensory systems and their development in no way guarantee a higher, complex formation of the personality» (ibid., p. 84).

These statements remind us to the formation of consciousness quite central to Historical cultural psychology, in which some peculiar aspects have to be stressed. By assuming language, already existing in the external environment, the child enters in the human dimension, or, to say it with a Vygotskyan term, overcoming biology and physiology, becomes umanized, (*undergoing to omission*). This process takes

however place only in the joint experience with the important, significant others. Through the concrete intercourse with the caregivers the subject's self becomes explicitly present to himself as human subject.

This aspect was called a "Vygotskijan consciousness" by Keith Oatley (see Marcel, Bisiach, 1988, p.375) and its development, as we all might remember, was explained by the joint-problem-solving predisposed by the adult caregivers in early infancy, as first by non-verbal gestures and forms of communications, then with an increasing repertoire of speech acts.

Historical cultural conception of higher psychical functions, which A.R. Luria (1976), he himself maintains he had mutuated from Vygotskij, has definitely explained the genesis of self-awareness not just as an "emergent property of mind", but as the result of reflective consciousness, brought about by the communicative and social functions of the cognitive system or, to use a Vygotskian definition, of the interfunctional system of consciousness (1934).

Vygotskijan and Lurijan conception of consciousness, nonetheless, in no case should be intended as a mirror reflection of the physical, bodily, self. It stems, and is made up, from the active experience the person has, of the physical and social world and its content, consisting in the internalization of perceptions: of the physical effects of our actions and of the social impressions of us, that the others have, verbally or non-verbally, conveyed back to us (see Oatley, in Marcel, Bisiach 1988, p.379).

A.N. Leont'ev (1975) as first conceptualized the intermediate path from sensation/perception to conscience, evidentiating that once the subject perceives whatever experience conveys it to the consciousness through the elaboration of a *sensorial image* (1975a).

Due to the conceptualization of the same author the introduction of the concept of Activity, already used by Vygotskij (1934) presents the new self-generated concept of personal sense, elaborated accordingly to the personal *meaning*, defined as personal *sense* in order not to be confused with the already existing social one. Both concepts, sensorial image and personal sense generate in everybody the sensorial texture of consciousness, corresponding to the personal experiencing of social objects. (Leont'ev, 1975, it. transl., p.116).

This way A.N. Leont'ev introduces an intermediate concept between the social and personal dimensions of experiences. In the historical cultural conception Vygotskij had already described the Zone of

proximal development which had an increasing dissemination all over the world. The latter can be intended as the first scene of whatever type of learning and as the conception explaining the acquisition – to note that Vygotskij writes *appropriation* - of whatever dynamic undergoing to learning. Some critics to Vygotskij were addressed to the sociogenesis of knowledge and to his strategy of interiorization explaining the genesis of acquiring knowledge. It wouldn't be possible to deepen them here. In some case a radical break-down¹ of the relations among the components of the group of the historical cultural conception, generated by Vygotskij, was supposed to account for these critics.

Interesting to observe that present day neuropsychology and cognitive sciences gave evidence of not verbal forms of consciousness, supporting the ideas expressed by Vygotskij, when subliminal stimuli are effective in facilitating subsequent perceptual and semantic judgments, as documented by Marcel (1983).

Research on split brain have documented that there is more an interaction among the two hemispheres than a modular division of functions, as previously believed. Studies by Gazzaniga found evidence of a capacity of the left hemisphere of naming visual information, presented as strictly lateralized to the right hemisphere, in a case of patients who underwent to surgical brain operation. He wrote (Gazzaniga, 1988, p.221): "... assessing what the brain is doing seems to be function of an interpreting module residing in the left hemisphere" (*ibid.*, p. 233). There are findings of modern neuroscience claiming for an "interpretative function acted upon the whole brain functioning" (by the left hemisphere) (*ibid.*,.236).

Classic psychological research, like the studies by Colin Cherry (1953) about the dichotic acoustical experience, giving evidence of a reconstructing a unitary meaning from different messages sent to the

¹ Who writes, being foreign scholar in Moscow with Leont'ev A.N. as tutor at the MGU, (see the introductory notes to this volume) had no suggestions about seminal disagreement between him and Vygotskij. Among the psychologists of the group engaged in the projecting a new science (to quote but some Luria, Gal'perin, Zaporozhev) a very deep and elevate sense of mutual appreciation and support dominated. The dramatical economical inner crisis in the newly declared Soviet Union and the consequences of the inner patriotic war and of II world-war brought about enormous difficulties in the everyday life and professional activity of most of them, so as to give way to the idea of abandoning Moscow and to move to Kharkov's Institute of Psychology. For more information: Vygotskaja G.L., Lifanova T. M. 1996;A.A. Leont'ev 2003; A.A. Leont'ev, D.A. Leont'ev, E.E. Sokolova, 2005).

two ears, also support the prioritarian effect of the meaning in the acquiring and elaborating knowledge. The same observation can be referred to the classical contribution by Bruner and Goodnow (1947), where an organizing influence upon the basic processes of perception of physical dimensions, a form of modular aspect of consciousness, is documented, acted by subjective elaborations, like *value* and *need*, starting from what is the aim of a personal sense.

As already exposed in the article required to the writing person for the scientific online Journal “Educação” published in Porto Alegre (Veggetti M.S., 2018a), somehow a central instance like the entire sense of Self, or, in later periods in life, personality seems to identify consciousness (Oatley, in Marcel, Bisiach 1988, p.378). As we remember, same Bruner defined value and need as autoctone determinants of behaviour (Bruner, Goodnow, 1947).

4.2. An explanation of the “becoming a person”

The socio-genetic conception seems to give a better explanation of the “becoming a person”, whether normal or handicapped. What we experience as consciousness is, like the phenomenologists have argued, a knowing and at the same time knowing that we know, but that this experience stems from the socially derived experience of the sense of self “as director and as part of the comparison processes of consciousness” (OATLEY, *ibid.*).

This statement reminds us to the definition for “personality”, already proposed by Allport (1961), with the role of Master controlling all psychical functions.

Davydov V.V. (1996), the outstanding scholar, representative of second generation of the historical-cultural psychology, focussing school-activity maintains that, in the frame of this trend in psychology, starting use the term “personality” stresses the specific human level of becoming “subject of the personal activity”.

Analyzing two different concepts like consciousness and personality in the context of psychological research, we find evidence of being both submitted to a developmental process. A.N. Leont'ev (1975) observed that we do not refer to the newborn as to a personality, from a psychological point of view, though the newborn has, of course, to be thought as subject of human rights.

The reference to a developmental acquisition of consciousness and self-consciousness is supposed to stress that personality, as clearly explained by A.N. Leont'ev (1975), is not the result of a genetic endowment, but a later acquisition in life.

4.3. The lack of culture and education for the developing child, brings about social disease for the individual and a threat for the whole society

The conscious experience of the world has to attain, according to him, the complete subjective dimension, proper to the formation of personality as subject of a productive activity. In fact, to personality pertains the creation of meanings, the subjective meaning, an activity assumes, as already exposed above. Whatever social meaning has to be previously recognized as personal, or, to say it more precisely, it becomes accepted by the individual inasmuch as charged of personal sense.

Now this brings us to re-thinking the way we usually intend learning, in order to better understand the younger generations, especially if school activity is concerned. Social activity of learning through instruction, both for normal and handicapped children, has to correspond to a need of the same pupils.

In his writings about Defectology, Vygotskij (1993, vol.2, p.191) explains quite clearly his conception, moving from the consideration of contemporary comparative research, which :«...proceeds from the general assumption that the laws governing the development of normal and abnormal children alike are basically the same. In the same way, the laws governing vital activity remain fundamentally the same, whether for normal or ill-functioning conditions in an organ or organism of the body». This observation becomes the cornerstone, he maintains, of the comparative study of children. «Where something atypical unfolds before us, something which deviates from the norms of development, those same regularities, now appearing in an entirely different complex of conditions, take on a qualitatively individual specific appearance, one which is not an absolute copy or photographic replica of childhood development...Thus, comparative research must always maintain dual tasks in its field of vision:1) establishment of general law and 2) uncovering their specific manifestations in the different variants of child development» (same text).

The further argumentations by Vygotskij refer to the statement that for the handicapped or retarded child is the collective experience more problematic, requiring efforts not shared in the normal collective relations, or in the cooperation and interaction with others.

This condition bringing about, in its turn, underdevelopment of higher mental functions, may be overcome predisposing a special education, affecting not only the manifestations but the very cause of it, claims Vygotskij (1993, vol.2, p.199).

A review of the scientific literature makes possible to observe that, in Western psychology and pedagogy, there has long been a not complete understanding of the meaning of school instruction.

Moreover, the nature of an effective human learning, according to Davydov, involves the whole personality as complex structure (Veggetti M.S., 2004, 2006), that is to say, brings about a major improvement of personality which he defined as "developmental", improving advancement². As we all know, the learning theory conceptualized by Davydov is called by him *Theory of developmental learning*, according to the title of his last book (Davydov V. V., 1996).

Becoming a personality through developmental learning, to Vygotsky as well to Makarenko, two giants of, respectively, psychology and education, starting to operate in Soviet Russia and Ukraine, results personal after it was interpersonal. However, even based on personality, learning cannot uniquely rely on a process of internalization, but must necessarily be attached to joint experience and communication and to the sense of them, or, to use the Leont'ev's, words, to personal sense (see above).

Davydov states (1996, p. 85): "... appropriation and development cannot act as two independent processes, since they correlate as a form and content of a single process of a person's mental development".

But here comes the final question: if this doesn't happen, if such options are not accessible to all, which is the destiny of the upper forms of human behaviour, knowledge, thinking?

Discovering the new, relies on the process of imagination, since the latter is capable of attaining the model of any phenomenon or object.

² Proposed to render the Russian expression "развивавший" in Italian as maggiorante, bringing about major improving, (VEGGETTI M.S., 2004, p.112) which is different from being simply developmental, in the sense of undergoing fisiological development, in growing up like it happens in becoming, from early infancy, an adult representative of humankind.

"Discovery" as a kind of theoretical knowledge cannot be transmitted in a completed form. (Davydov V.V., 1996, Lazarev V. S., coauth. Martirosyan B.P., 2004). Davydov follows Vygotsky (1930), also focusing on imagination, to indicate a process responsible for creativity. However, to Vygotskij, imagination and creativity are not conceivable without the support of a rich everyday experience. This reminds, again, to social experience (Vygotskij, 1926). Davydov recommended the use of an experimental-like approach for the formation of conscious theoretical knowledge, so that the discovery of every event or phenomena, in the history of science, could be created anew by the pupils.

All what upper exposed should convince us that the importance of the historical cultural theory and its further development by the Vygotsky's followers in post-Soviet Russia for the formation of young specialists in education can be very meaningful for projecting instruction for normal and BES cases. (Veggetti, 2018, p.148-149)

4.4. Learning not supported by accessible social educational activity act anyway on the individual plane without standing the acquisition of human values

If instruction, or every properly educational task, are concerned, they should be meaningful for the learner himself, though at the same time they also present, no doubt, social values.

For the Russian pedagogist Blonskij (1919), master of Vygotskij, a peculiar consideration is devoted to the subjective meaning of working experience, to labour, and Leont'ev A.N. (1975) explicitly considers, as already exposed, the elaboration of personal meaning as the final aim of the growing personality. Davydov conceived learning as a general form of human life, arguing that human life is, in its essential dimension, the result of an endless learning process (1972, 1988, 1996).

Re-considering the development of higher psychological functions, the higher levels of thinking are tied to instruction generating them and improving their quality. Not always formal instruction has considered, however, or to say it better, at least sufficiently considered, other processes and activities typical of man, like research, play, discovering and, specifically for humankind, imagination and projecting. Reflection and cooperation as components of human experience have

both to be considered central to school education and instruction as recent longitudinal research has evidenced. About this further.

4.5 Inclusion, generating the feeling to be part of a joint activity of new creations and projects, increases well-being in whatever group, the opposite way gives rise to social hate and envie (Bergoglio, *Fratelli tutti*)

As upper exposed, Vygotsky (1931/60) and a group of his associates provided education and psychology with a systemic model for the development of all higher mental functions, devising language as its specific tool of mediation. Perception, memory, attention, classification, reasoning, all higher cognitive processes undergo profound interfunctional changes, attaining meaningful forms of learning, provided the object of learning corresponds to an individual need.

Davydov (1996, p. 92) focuses attention precisely on this question. He worked several decades in close cooperation with the Russian epistemologist and logician E. Ilyenkov.

Theoretical thinking, also referred to as dialectical, can be considered a H.O.T. (Higher Order Thoughts, see R. J. Sternberg 2000). Some main processes characterizing theoretical thinking are: meaningful analysis, planning and reflection. Important taking into account that this thinking is not connected with instructional processes, if traditional schools are considered.

In fact, the latter are based on transmission of disciplines without options for research of new.

According to Davydov, indeed, the powerful form of theoretical thinking is generated by research processes (1988, 1996). As we remember, he wrote that the lack of research in life is a source and symptom of disease. So, according to him and his close coworkers Rubtsov V.V., Zukerman G.A. and Venger L.A., to name but some, research - activity has to be introduced in basic school and instruction.

A new type of school is supposed to give way to an organized problem-solving activity based on group cooperation, according to specific criteria (Rubtsov 2008). Consequently, a new Historical-cultural School was devised, in Russia, for the acquiring of a projecting activity, by which new forms of joint learning could bring together pupils of different culture and social experience. A sort of extended inclusion.

Research becomes indeed a true general inclusive form of instruction, since it presupposes no distinctions among teaching and learning persons.

Concluding, pursuing the task of discovering new ways for problem-solving is deeply connected with research-activity. The latter in extremely differentiated types of activity seems to be a more suitable way apt of coping with the generally recognized question of every traditional school, functioning at the present time, in many countries, consisting in the not preparing learners to the future. A future, which nobody, neither adults, teachers, nor either younger pupil, know.

If so, a better way for preparing youngsters to this perspective could be predispose for them, through research, the discovery of new. Evidence given in a longitudinal research, realized on the basis of a project by same Davydov, along 8 years in a basic school of Moscow demonstrates that the way pupils become authonomous subjects of their learning activity at school, starts when they accept to take the risk of participate in the shared construction of new knowledge: "The development of this autonomous subject takes place at the moment he/she participates in shared problem-solving by means of a joint research of new forms of acting." (Zuckerman, Venger, 2010, p.143).

This seems to be the main challenge expecting whatever form of instruction and education, every attempt at inclusive education. Inclusion, generating the feeling to be part of a joint activity discovering new creations and projects, increases the wellbeing of the components of whatever group, the opposite way makes the individual discover social hate and envie. (Bergoglio, *Fratelli tutti*, 2020) A challenge impossible to avoid, in front of requests and new needs presented to humans from the COVID 19 pandemic, urging everywhere.

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5. Why we should refer to Vygotsky starting with the study of his historical context

Luciano Mecacci

Forty years ago, a conference dedicated to Vygotsky's work was held in the Aula Magna of the National Research Council in Rome. It was the first time, worldwide, that a specific conference was held on the Russian psychologist. Later, in October 1980, a conference was then held in Chicago and another one, in June 1981, in Moscow. In Italy in the 70s, there were already many translations of both Vygotsky's writings and works of historical-cultural theory, and this early interest on the part of Italian scholars was due to social-cultural factors of various nature and to the innovative social movements of left intelligentsia active in the country (Mecacci, 2015). At the Conference in Rome the participation of experts from different sectors (from psychology to pedagogy, from linguistics to aesthetics, to the history of Russian literature) was also a demonstration that the idea of Vygotsky as the "Mozart of psychology" a solitary hero of psychology, a theorist rather than an experimenter, had to be overcome, and that the vastness of his scientific and cultural contributions had to be adequately valued. My introductory report to the conference sought to summarize Vygotsky's multifaceted work and, in light of contemporary studies, probably the most relevant aspect that I managed to highlight was the role that Vygotsky played in Soviet pedology (Mecacci, 1979). However, today a general overview of Vygotsky's life and work would be largely different (I made such an attempt in my recent monograph on Vygotsky (Mecacci, 2019). In fact, the studies on Vygotsky have grown dramatically, and the picture of this classic author of twentieth-century psychology has changed widely. I will briefly analyze the main aspects of the new Vygotskian literature, what some Russian colleagues call *vygotskovedenie* (a full bibliography is given in Mecacci, 2017, pp. 145-164).

The reprint of Vygotsky's writings or the first publication of some of his previously unpublished works was the first fundamental moment of the new season of research on Vygotsky. As is known, the main event was represented by the publication of the six volumes of *Sobranie sochinenij*, with the corresponding English translation of the six volumes of *Collected Works*. These were then followed by the Spanish translation and other partial translations in German, Portuguese, etc. Through a comparative analysis of these Russian editions and reprints, it became clear to me that what was unanimously agreed to be Vygotsky's main work (*Myshlenie i rech'* [*Thinking and Speech*]) had been subject to serious editorial interventions in the 1956 reprint and then further in the 1982 reprint, compared to the first edition of 1934. In 1990 my complete translation was published, based on the 1934 edition, with a comparison with the 1956 and 1982 editions. In 2002, Lompscher and Rückriem, taking my edition also into consideration, made a new German translation. In 2001 a full Russian reprint was finally published. It should be noted that to date there is no complete translation into English of *Myshlenie i rech'* (that which is included in the *Collected Works* is, in fact, based on the censored edition of 1982) (Mecacci, Yasnitsky, 2011; van der Veer, Yasnitsky, 2011). The same problem arose for almost all of Vygotsky's writings: a complete Russian edition of *Psychology of Art* appeared only in 2001. The need to have unabridged editions of Vygotsky's works seemed to have been overcome with the start of a new edition of the complete works, foreseen in 16 volumes, but so far only the first volume has been released, and this undertaking seems to have stalled. However, for the purpose of a more comprehensive reconstruction of Vygotsky's work – in the context of his biography and its historical, social and political context – the publication of the *Zapiski* [Notebooks] was a great event. A separate discussion deserves the appearance of new editions and/or translations of the writings on pedology (see below). A turning point in the study of Vygotsky's biography was represented by the books by van der Veer, Valsiner (1991) and Vygodskaya, Livanova (1996) (in the same period the first comprehensive overview appeared in Italian: Veggetti, 1994).

Once the reliability of the Vygotsky texts that are available to the researcher today is assured, a new question arises: What, in these texts, is actually the product of an original elaboration by Vygotsky? In other words, was a systematic comparison made between Vygotsky's ideas and what was being expressed by his contemporaries? In the most extreme cases, limiting ourselves to *Thinking and Speech*, today we know that some

statements that were always considered typical and proper of Vygotsky actually belonged to other authors: for example, the statement about the word as a microcosm of human consciousness (Mecacci, 2016) and much of the discussion on internal dialogue, literally derived from Yakubinsky (van der Veer, Zavershneva, 2018).

There was therefore talk of a "revisionist" phase of historical research on the work of Vygotsky, with the aim to review what Vygotsky's effective contribution was to the development of psychological research in his time (Yasnitsky, van der Veer, 2016). In fact, often this contribution has been analyzed in the light of *a special Vygotsky*, what we could know, what was read from the 1960s onwards, and this *special Vygotsky* was compared with the state of psychology of the late twentieth century. Vygotsky should instead be studied with respect to the historical and cultural context of his time. Vygotsky has certainly written a remarkable essay on the "crisis of psychology": it is correct to analyze his analysis in the context of the studies in the 1920s and 1930s on the "crisis of psychology" written by Western psychologists, but since Vygotsky's work remained unpublished until 1982, it cannot be considered as an effective contribution to that debate. Even the idea of a compact historical-cultural school around the figure of Vygotsky, and formed by the famous troika Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria, must be greatly revised (Keiler, 2012). On the other hand, there is a risk that this "revisionist" approach will lead to a devaluation of the actual original contributions of Vygotsky, as Akhutina (2019) has well underlined. There are some aspects that, in my opinion, future research should deepen.

In the first place, it should be noted that the extensive research carried out by Vygotsky in the fields of pedology – which must not to be considered a synonym of Soviet pedagogical psychology – and defectology was overshadowed (a) by having considered Vygotsky as a theorist of psychology, in particular cognitive psychology, even to the point of making him a precursor of the cognitivism of the 1960s; and (b) by the insistence on the comparison between Piaget and Vygotsky on the relative positions around the cognitive development of the child. In life, Vygotsky published much more in these two areas than in any field of psychology. If we consider the empirical and theoretical part of *Thinking and Speech*, the work on which the vision of Vygotsky as a psychologist of cognition focused, we can easily see that the experimental research on the concepts was the work of other psychologists, although they were his students and collaborators, while theoretical reflections on thinking, inner speech and inner dialogue

were strongly affected by the ongoing debate in psychology and linguistics of the time.

Today we can easily read all of Vygotsky's main writings on pedology and defectology in Russian or Western languages (Vygotsky, 2001, 2019, 2020; Vygotskij, 2018). Here we find the original features of Vygotsky's thought that characterize him compared to contemporary authors: the foundation of a unitary science of child development and the search for principles and levels of analysis transversal to the various biological, medical, psychological, social and pedagogical disciplines, on the one hand; the revision of the concept of deficit, and the relationship between normal and pathological, on the other.

The pedologist and defectologist Vygotsky was not a desk psychologist but a politically and socially committed psychologist. If you wanted to make a comparison with a Western psychologist, you should not be dealing with Piaget who only indirectly dealt with the social and political issues of his Switzerland, but with George Politzer (1928) who was highly appreciated by Vygotsky in the proposal of a "concrete psychology" of man. Vygotsky was the typical representative of the left-wing intellectual born with the Bolshevik revolution. He had high-level political contacts from Nadezhda Krupskaya, pedagogist and Lenin's wife, to Anatoly Lunacharsky, People's Commissar of Enlightenment (Fitzpatrick, 1970). On an ideological level, Vygotsky was close to Trotsky's positions, as evidenced by various passages, once censored, of his recently published works and notebooks. The theme of the relationship between psychology, psychoanalysis and pedology, with the central reference to Trotsky, was discussed in the classic book by Etkind (new edition, 2016) and can still be explored fruitfully. This ideological-political intertwining, which we can summarize in the concept of Trotskyism, re-emerges when we take into consideration the 1936 Pedology Decree, and the ban on pedology and the works of pedologists such as Vygotsky (Caroli and Mecacci, 2020). This event was not a matter of pure and simple criticism of the so-called "bourgeois distortions" of pedology but expressed the tough internal struggle within the Soviet Communist Party that would soon result in the years of the Great Terror (Conquest, 2008). As a general framework for education policy in the Soviet Union of that period, it should be remembered that Krupskaya came into conflict with Stalin in 1925, and her self-accusation in 1927 saved her, but in fact she lost her previous power; Lunacharsky died in 1929 and was replaced by Andrej Bubnov, who was shot in August 1938. The history of Soviet psychology and pedagogy, as well as the

history of Soviet science in general, cannot be separated from this context in which the cultural and scientific debate had direct implications for personal and family life: An apparently theoretical alignment had other reasons that can escape if one does not take into account a situation in which personal and family life was at stake (Aron Zalkind, leader of pedology, died of a heart attack as soon as he heard of the Decree in July 1936; Zhosefina Shif, pupil and collaborator of Vygotsky [she conducted experimental research on the formation of concepts] was persecuted from 1936 to 1946; Isaak Shpielrein, leader of Soviet psychotechnics, and brother of the psychoanalyst Sabina Shpielrein, was shot in 1937; Gustav Shpet, philosopher, whose thought had a profound influence on Vygotsky, was shot in 1937; Lidya Luria, psychiatrist, and sister of Aleksandr Luria, spent one year in a concentration camp after her husband was shot in 1937; Solomon Levit, director of the Institute of Medicine and Genetics where Aleksandr Luria conducted his well-known research on the cognitive processes of twins, was shot in 1938; Ivan Ermakov, leader of psychoanalysis, died in prison in 1942; etc.).

It may be interesting to remember that the political dimension of Vygotsky's work was captured in Western Europe and the United States between the 1970s and the early 1990s by left movements critical of the institutionalization forms of psychology and psychiatry: We can recall the contributions of Newman and Holzman on Vygotsky "revolutionary scientist" (1993), and the perspective of Critical psychology developed in the German and North Europe universities (Ijzendoorn, van der Veer, 1983; today Critical psychology is an international trend of contemporary psychology: Fleer, González, Jones, 2020), while it is meaningful that Italian Red Brigades had Vygotsky as their favorite psychologist (Mecacci, 2015).

A Vygotskian idea, based on this close relationship between psychological research and socio-political commitment, in my opinion remains its most remarkable theoretical contribution, beyond the results obtained in specific areas of cognitive psychology and educational psychology. The conception of the historicity of the higher psychological functions (or of the "psychological systems," according to the formulation elaborated in the last years of Vygotsky's life) does not mean only that, based on a universal genetic endowment (the brain of the human species), different psychological organizations develop in different epochs or in different social and cultural contexts in the same epoch. At the same time, a certain psychological organization, typical of the classical world, of the Middle Ages, or of the end of the nineteenth century in the Western or in the Eastern

world, builds an own conception of inner reality, the psyche, the mind, as if it was an external object, as if it was a type of the so-called objective reality. Here, however, there is a vicious circle that emerges in the study of inner reality, unlike research on external reality (although here it could be done, and – as is known – a reflection was made on the objectivity of research on "external reality," an objectivity free from the historical-cultural conditioning of the scientist). Circularity consists of the fact that the "scientific" conception of psychological processes directly depends on the psychological organization of the person carrying out the research: not in the sense of the Kantian circularity, according to which there cannot be an objective psychology because it is the same mind, in its universal structure and functioning, which investigates itself, but because the investigating mind is conditioned by the historical-cultural representation that it has of itself. This historical-cultural representation of the mind contains a complex of functional principles that characterize both normal behavior and behavior that deviates from the norm. Consider two classic examples of psychology contemporary to Vygotsky: sexual development according to Freud and cognitive development according to Piaget. Development is characterized by various stages that become the "normal" path and with respect to which it is established (normative criterion) what is the deviant or pathological behavior. Unlike the idea of pathological in medicine, what is pathological according to psychology has *direct* social and political implications. The clearest case is homosexuality considered by Freud as a sexual aberration, a pathological behavior for psychology and psychiatry texts (as is known, the evaluation of homosexuality in the DSM had a historical evolution until its disappearance as a "disturbance" in 1980 and as a distinct psychiatric category in 1987). The "revolution in the classification of mental illness" of the 1980s (Mayes, Horwitz, 2005) was the product of the results of new empirical research, but above all the outcome of the change of conceptions on the mind and behavior matured in those years in Western society. The mind is therefore not an object of nature that can be studied without considering those who study it in a given historical-cultural context, with all the heritage and baggage of values that a society and culture deem positive while in another context they are considered prejudices and socially and politically discriminatory parameters. This is, in my opinion, Vygotsky's most important lesson, even more valid in the present century in which racial and gender discriminations continue to be supported by implicit or explicit psychological and behavioral evaluations.

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6. Per un bilancio su Vygotskij e la filosofia del linguaggio

Stefano Gensini

1. Sia consentito aprire queste note con un ricordo personale. Negli anni Settanta, alla Sapienza, il nome di Lev S. Vygotskij e la lettura della sua grande opera *Pensiero e linguaggio* (1934) accompagnavano gli studenti di Filosofia assieme a linguisti e teorici quali Ferdinand de Saussure e Louis Hjelmslev, a filosofi come Ludwig Wittgenstein: facevano parte, a dirla in breve, del ristretto numero dei classici sui quali una disciplina allora agli inizi del suo cammino accademico profilava la sua ossatura concettuale. Non dappertutto era così. Alla Sapienza insegnava Maria Serena Veggetti, che tanto aveva e avrebbe ancora fatto per far conoscere Vygotskij in Italia e in Occidente; e qualche stanza più in là faceva lezione Tullio De Mauro, primo ordinario italiano di Filosofia del linguaggio, impegnato allora e dopo su una linea di linguistica teorica che vedeva nell'approccio “storico-culturale” dello psicologo russo¹ istanze convergenti con quelle della linea maestra della linguistica saussuriana, ma anche con pensatori anomali, quali il citato Wittgenstein o Antonio Gramsci, che al linguaggio avevano riservato una posizione essenziale nella loro idea della conoscenza e del rapporto individuo-società.

Malgrado siano passati tanti anni, e malgrado l'immensa popolarità che Vygotskij ha conseguito fra gli psicologi, i pedagogisti, gli scienziati cognitivi, anzitutto in quella cultura nordamericana che lo aveva inizialmente respinto, direi che proprio la filosofia del linguaggio è rimasta indietro nell'assorbire e valorizzare il messaggio dello studioso. Vi sono ragioni di questo ritardo. Quella essenziale, a mio avviso, è la prevalenza assunta dal paradigma analitico, notoriamente incentrato sul proprio, ristretto programma di ricerca circa gli aspetti

¹ Cfr. la ricostruzione di Mecacci (2009), pp. 317-372.

logici del linguaggio e su coordinate (anche linguistiche, terminologiche ecc.) tendenzialmente autoreferenziali. Sta di fatto che, se si consulta, ad esempio, il sistematico repertorio di Filosofia del linguaggio edito nella nota collana HSK della De Gruyter nel 1992-96², un'opera in tre tomi, oltre duemila pagine in corpo minuto, intesa a coprire potenzialmente tutti gli aspetti della disciplina, il nome di Vygotskij occorre solo quattro volte (e di passata) dinanzi – poniamo – a oltre quaranta citazioni di Austin, a una trentina di citazioni di Fodor, e a un numero difficilmente calcolabile di citazioni di Frege o Russell. In breve, Vygotskij non è entrato nel corredo teorico della filosofia del linguaggio *mainstream*, mentre è entrato, per la via regia, in quello di settori di ricerca con cui essa sempre più frequentemente intrattiene rapporti proficui: penso in particolare al settore delle scienze cognitive, dove capita di incontrare l'idea vygotskiana della mediazione linguistica delle operazioni conoscitive presso in lavori ormai classici, quali Deacon (1997), Clark (1999), Moll - Tomasello (2007) e altri.

È dunque urgente un recupero, meditato e seriamente argomentato, dei motivi per cui l'opera di Vygotskij, che oggi possiamo leggere e studiare su una base testuale e informativa enormemente più ampia e ricca di quanto si poteva fare negli anni Sessanta-Settanta, merita di essere accolta (diciamo così) nel curriculum dello studioso di teorie e fatti linguistici³. Dico subito che con questo breve scritto non presumo di svolgere compiutamente il punto indicato nel titolo: un vero e proprio bilancio richiederebbe competenze diverse, oltre a quella di chi scrive, il quale ha anzitutto l'enorme limite di non poter accedere ai testi di Vygotskij in lingua originale, requisito indispensabile – credo – per ogni ricerca seria e certamente per chi ha a che fare col tema del linguaggio.

Sia dunque consentito formulare alcune valutazioni di massima, desunte dalla rilettura di alcune fra le principali opere vygotskiane e dalla consultazione di una parte almeno della ormai vastissima letteratura critica⁴.

² Cfr. Dascal, Gerhardus, Lorenz, Meggle (eds.) (1992-96), *ad indicem nominum*.

³ A parte la ricchezza e l'accuratezza editoriali delle opere disponibili in lingua italiana (vedi oltre), è opportuno almeno menzionare l'importante edizione in inglese delle opere in 6 volumi diretta da Robert W. Rieber e collaboratori; cfr. Rieber et al. (eds.) (1987-1999).

⁴ È doveroso, ma anche grato, dichiarare il debito che queste riflessioni hanno con il grande, amoro so lavoro fatto da M. S. Veggetti e L. Mecacci per far conoscere storicamente e criticamente, in Italia e altrove, l'opera vygotskiana.

2. Parto dalla questione che già molti anni or sono si imponeva a chi avvicinasse *Pensiero e linguaggio* tramite la griglia delle grandi opere di linguistica teorica della prima metà del Novecento⁵: quella del ruolo svolto dalla lingua-madre del parlante nel processo conoscitivo. Per riassumere con le parole di Vygotskij (cito qui dalla traduzione-edizione resa disponibile nel 1990 da Luciano Mecacci):

«Una parola priva di significato non è una parola. È un suono vuoto, quindi il significato è un segno distintivo necessario, costitutivo della parola stessa. E' la parola presa nel suo aspetto interno. Ma il significato della parola dal punto di vista psicologico [...] non è altro che una generalizzazione o un concetto. Generalizzazione e significato della parola sono sinonimi. Ogni generalizzazione, ogni formazione di un concetto è l'atto di pensiero più specifico, più originale, più sicuro. Di conseguenza consideriamo a ragione il significato della parola come un fenomeno del pensiero» (1990/1934: 325).

Queste affermazioni, collocate storicamente, coincidevano alla perfezione col nocciolo delle posizioni di Ferdinand de Saussure, il cui postumo *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916, 2nda ed. 1922), al netto dei limiti e degli equivoci redazionali e interpretativi dovuti all'intervento dei collaboratori Charles Bally e Albert Sechehaye, aveva indicato nella inseparabilità di significante e significato il *quid semiologico* del linguaggio. La bifaccialità è condizione costitutiva della parola in quanto segno; né l'arbitrarietà (cioè l'immotivatezza in senso naturale o logico dell'associazione fra le due componenti) implica che significante e significato siano reciprocamente indifferenti: lo sono su un piano astrattamente di principio, non su quel piano concretamente *storico* che attiene al funzionamento di ogni lingua verbale. Storicamente, significante e significato si uniscono in modo necessario, in dipendenza di fattori sia di tradizione sia di uso radicati nella “massa parlante”, nome col quale il linguista ginevrino suole riferirsi alla comunità linguistica.

⁵ Non ignoro, ovviamente, che in anni recenti alcuni studi hanno sviscerato le fonti dell'ultimo fondamentale capitolo di *Pensiero e linguaggio*, dando quasi l'idea di un *collage* di brani ricavati da testi ottocenteschi e contemporanei; e che la stessa battuta finale del libro, divenuta quasi proverbiale, potrebbe esser stata ripresa da una fonte finora sconosciuta (cfr. Van der Veer – Zavershneva 2018; Mecacci 2020). Che Vygotskij, non linguista, attingesse con abbondanza a fonti specialistiche sembra tutto sommato fisologico; ma è nel senso complessivo che le “tessere” così identificate vengono a formare che si rivela la originalità del suo pensiero linguistico.

Ora, Vygotskij era notoriamente legato a quella florida corrente di pensiero linguistico e poetologico che aveva assunto, fra Mosca e San Pietroburgo, i connotati della scuola cosiddetta “formalista” e che in anni successivi avrebbe prodotto il circolo di Mikhail Bachtin⁶: una corrente connessa per un verso alla fresca lezione di Saussure, per un altro al magistero humboldtiano di Alexander A. Potebnja, il cui ruolo nella tradizione accademica russa è stato ancora in anni recenti giustamente sottolineato⁷. Il carattere fortemente unitario del concetto di “parola”, o segno linguistico, nella quale il versante semantico ha una funzione propulsiva, è il tratto comune di queste due scuole di pensiero, che per molti aspetti sembrano costituire un’unica traipla teorica. Alla concezione humboldtiana di “forma interna della lingua” corrisponde il principio saussuriano secondo cui, nel linguaggio, esiste un principio formale (o meglio, un principio “formante”) che si imprime sulla massa del suono e del senso, dando ad essa identità, struttura. “La lingua è forma e non sostanza”, aveva detto Saussure, giacché le sue categorie, diverse da parlata a parlata, modellano arbitrariamente il materiale fonico disponibile al parlante articolando, assieme ad esso, le griglie attraverso cui il dicibile si incanala in spazi semanticamente concreti. Ma come i formalisti – da studiosi di arte e letteratura – avevano privilegiato la dinamica svolta del “procedimento” tecnico nello straniare e rinnovare il linguaggio, così Vygotskij, psicologo e pedagogista, si concentra sul processo cognitivo che, incontrandosi con lo sviluppo della competenza linguistica, sfocia nell’organizzazione del significato. E ciò, proprio negli anni in cui il capofila della linguistica nordamericana, il behaviorista Louis Bloomfield, suggeriva di escludere la semantica dal raggio d’azione della linguistica scientifica in quanto entità non osservabile e quindi a suo dire non sottoponibile (diversamente dalla fonetica e dalla morfologia) a riscontri oggettivi.

Torna utile a questo punto avere sotto gli occhi una celebre pagina saussuriana, quella dedicata al “valore” (Saussure 1971: 136-138), che illustra in modo assai efficace i livelli di discorso fin qui ricordati: quello della segnicità del linguaggio e quello della sua arbitrarietà.

⁶ Per un aggiornata informazione sul tema cfr. Ponzio (a c. di) (2014), contenente una scelta di testi di Bachtin e dei suoi più stretti collaboratori.

⁷ Cfr. in proposito Fontaine (2006) e Pilshchikov (2017), anche per riferimenti alla scuola formalista.

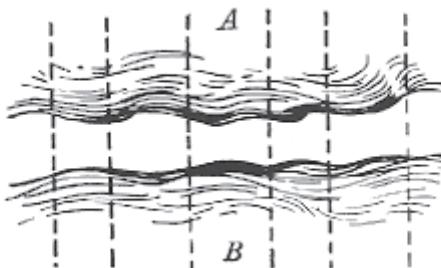


Fig. 1. SAUSSURE (1971). *Corso di linguistica generale*, p.137

L'idea è che il linguaggio (= ogni singola lingua storico-naturale) "ritagli" simultaneamente i due piani del suono (A) e del senso (B) proiettando sulle "masse confuse" che preesistono (potenzialmente) al segno delle concrete articolazioni linguistiche: abbiamo così da una parte certe unità "significanti" e dall'altra certe unità semantiche: le quali, si badi, non coincidono con punti, ma con *spazi*, cioè con insiemi o classi di punti possibili, delimitate a destra e a sinistra. È così, ad esempio, che l'italiano distingue "sedia" da "poltrona", da "divano", da "sedile" ecc., sicché ogni lemma, nel momento in cui si distingue dagli altri della stessa serie, funziona da identificatore di entità concrete (cioè di tipi di sedie, divani ecc.) teoricamente infinite. È merito della rilettura di Saussure avviata negli anni Cinquanta-Sessanta da Robert Godel e poi sviluppata da Rudolf Engler e dal citato De Mauro se questo carattere "spaziale", dunque dinamico, elastico, del significato ci è divenuto familiare. Quel che Saussure doveva aver chiaro negli anni Dieci del Novecento, non lo era altrettanto ai fautori estremi dell'arbitrarismo linguistico degli anni Trenta (faccio per tutti il nome del linguista e antropologo americano Benjamin Lee Whorf) che, nel momento in cui enfatizzavano la "relatività" culturale dei significati, la fissavano però entro uno schema statico: quasi cristalli giustapposti e in ultima analisi incomunicanti in cui si esprimerebbe la radicale alterità delle lingue.

Quale suggestione si può invece ricavare dalla teoria vygotskiana? Il punto centrale dipende, a me sembra, da quella scelta della prospettiva *genetica* che Vygotskij applica con grande maestria nella *Storia dello sviluppo delle funzioni psichiche superiori* all'insieme delle facoltà conoscitive umane e in particolare al linguaggio. La concezione evolutiva che lo psicologo adotta nel cercare di cogliere il *percorso* della generalizzazione, dai primi mesi di vita alla fase scolare avanzata, ci fa capire

che quegli spazi arbitrariamente ritagliati dalla (e con l'apprendimento della) lingua-madre hanno una fisionomia differente nei vari gradi dello sviluppo. Come ha scritto con efficacia Vygotskij, la circostanza che l'infante e l'adulto si trovino a condividere – a un certo punto – delle risorse lessicali, nasconde il fatto esse hanno un valore diverso per ciascuno dei due, in quanto rispecchiano forme di categorizzazione dell'esperienza profondamente differenti. La parola *palla* (comunque articolata) può servire al bambino piccolo per raggruppare (e dunque a suo modo per controllare), volta a volta, tutti i giocattoli, tutti gli oggetti piacevoli, tutti gli oggetti tondeggianti, o altro ancora, ben prima ch'essa giunga a restringersi alla funzione categoriale per così dire standard che svolge nella parlata degli adulti, e che anche lui raggiungerà col passare dei mesi e degli anni. L'idea che il processo di categorizzazione del bambini sia per un verso vincolato alla organizzazione *in fieri* del suo cervello, dall'altra al processo di adattamento con cui la cultura (cioè anzitutto i genitori e il gruppo sociale di riferimento) lo attrae al suo interno, questa idea è un contributo notevolissimo alla comprensione di come la sfera semantica funziona, sia evolutivamente sia, per così dire, in sincronia: e tanto più potrebbe esserlo se (come si è cominciato a fare negli ultimi vent'anni) si utilizzassero sistematicamente le tecniche di *imaging* cerebrale per verificare "dal basso" l'impatto delle diversità linguistico-concettuali. Il "significato" linguistico (in quanto struttura socialmente condivisa) è dunque il punto d'arrivo di un percorso di adattamento insieme cognitivo e storico-culturale. Più in generale, la concezione del significato promossa da Vygotskij si incontra con un principio che, presente ma solo parzialmente espresso in Saussure, sta trovando applicazione negli studi recenti di linguistica teorica, specialmente in quelli orientati (sulla linea del secondo Wittgenstein) a riorientare la tradizionale dicotomia fra "semantica" e "pragmatica": alludo all'idea della *plasticità* del significato, che impedisce di tracciare una linea netta di divisione fra il valore istituzionale (o "letterale", come infelicemente dicono taluni filosofi del linguaggio) di parole e frasi e il loro valore d'uso, riferito a gamme di situazioni socio-comunicative possibili⁸. Questa plasticità o "apertura" semantica che rende le risorse linguistiche perennemente disponibili a saturare le esigenze comunicative è un presupposto costante della teoria vygotskijana che molta ricerca odierna sembra finalmente riscoprire nel vivo delle sue indagini.

⁸ Si rimanda per questi temi a Börjesson (2014).

3. Si è già accennato allo spirito humboldtiano che anima la riflessione sul linguaggio di Vygotskij. Esso consiste nella convinzione, risalente ai saggi-chiave del grande pensatore tedesco, che il linguaggio (sia in generale, in quanto sistema simbolico, sia in particolare, in quanto lingua-madre delle persone) non sia una “convenzione”, non sia cioè, come riteneva ancora uno Whitney, uno strumento di cui il pensiero si serve per comunicare i propri contenuti, bensì cooperi attivamente alla formazione e chiarificazione del pensiero, nell’atto stesso del suo socializzarsi. Vygotskij riprende dunque da Wilhelm von Humboldt (ma anche da una più ampia tradizione di pensiero semiotico illuministico, da Leibniz a Condillac, a Destutt de Tracy) il principio della mediazione *segnica* delle attività intellettuali. La “strumentalità” del linguaggio non consiste cioè in una sua pretesa indifferenza rispetto al dispositivo mentale, ma nel fatto che proprio attraverso il processo di simbolizzazione le pratiche umane assumono un significato, si stabilizzano, potenziano le capacità conoscitive che in certo modo esse stesse presuppongono.

Si aggancia a questo tema il ben noto contributo dato dallo psicologo russo allo studio del “linguaggio interno (o interiore)”. Diversamente dal primo Piaget, che vede il bambino piccolo passare da una fase di egocentrismo a una progressiva socializzazione, Vygotskij ritiene che il linguaggio cosiddetto “egocentrico” del bambino, affiorante intorno al terzo anno di vita, coincide con la sua dispiegata socialità, nel senso che il bambino non distingue fra una dimensione pubblica e una dimensione privata della comunicazione; in questa fase, le sue produzioni linguistiche, tipicamente realizzate in sinergia col gioco, hanno una importantissima funzione di autoregolazione del comportamento. I segni, in altri termini, svolgono quella particolare funzione strumentale di cui si è parlato, retroagendo sui meccanismi psicologici di base. La sua ulteriore idea è che, al declino del linguaggio egocentrico, questa funzione autoregolativa non scompaia, ma venga interiorizzata, aprendosi dunque un bivio (che è un vero e proprio salto verso la maturazione cognitiva) fra il linguaggio “per gli altri” e una forma peculiare di “linguaggio per sé” di cui si tratta di indagare la sconosciuta grammatica. La concezione vygotskijana è formulata chiaramente già nel saggio (redatto con Lurija attorno al 1930 ma rimasto inedito fino al 1984) su *Strumento e segno nello sviluppo del bambino*, dove leggiamo:

«Così il segno appare inizialmente, nel comportamento del bambino, come mezzo di legame sociale, come una funzione intrapsichica; divenendo poi un mezzo di controllo del proprio comportamento, trasferisce semplicemente la relazione sociale con il soggetto all'interno della personalità. La legge genetica più importante e generale, cui ci conduce la nostra indagine sulle funzioni psichiche superiori, dice che ogni attività simbolica del bambino era una volta una forma sociale di cooperazione e conserva in tutto il suo sviluppo, fino alle punte più alte, la modalità sociale di funzionamento. La storia delle funzioni psichiche superiori si manifesta qui come la storia della trasformazione dei mezzi di comportamento sociale in mezzi di organizzazione psicologica individuale» (1997/1930: 67).

La linea di ricerca introdotta da Vygotskij ristrutturava in modo profondo il dibattito sul linguaggio interno avviato negli anni Ottanta dell'Ottocento da un famoso libro di Victor Egger (1881) e sviluppato negli anni Dieci-Venti del nuovo secolo soprattutto da ricercatori francesi e tedeschi. In uno scritto di sintesi risalente al 1929, che Vygotskij potrebbe aver letto, Schilling riassume in tre punti le funzioni del linguaggio interno: quella di aiuto alla comprensione, quella di aiuto alla produzione del pensiero, infine quella di facilitare il passaggio (*Uebergang*) alla lingua parlata. Rispetto a questi studi, di provenienza psicologica e psico-pedagogica, Vygostkij fa due evidenti passi in avanti: (1) approfondisce la funzione specificamente *semiotica*, autoregolativa, di questa forma di linguaggio e (2) pone il problema delle sue modalità di funzionamento (non riducibili, come più volte spiega, a una sorta di linguaggio senza voce), ovviamente non sovrapponibili a quella della comunicazione “per gli altri”. Prende così forma quella idea del carattere “predicativo” del linguaggio interno che ovviamente dipende dalla sua natura strettamente privata, e che proprio per questo non necessita dell’architettura morfosintattica del linguaggio manifesto. Siamo per tanto nel punto di confine in cui da una parte l’attività del pensare si materializza, incorporandosi nei segni, e dall’altra i segni quasi si volatilizzano nel flusso dell’attività psichica: si pensi all’operazione di apparecchiare il tavolo per la cena: sequenze complesse, serializzate e ritualizzate, di azioni che per un verso presuppongono la codifica linguistico-visiva di certi tipi di oggetti, per un altro verso non richiedono, nella maggior parte delle situazioni, alcuna “messa-in-frase” da parte dell’agente.

Non è un caso che, data la piega comportamentista presa da molta ricerca psicologica e linguistica dagli anni Trenta in poi, il tema in questione abbia trovato così scarsa accoglienza negli studi sul linguaggio. È pertanto utile segnalare che, proprio negli anni in cui Vygotskij elabora i suoi capolavori, esso trova almeno indirettamente sviluppo in due teorici del linguaggio di riconosciuta grandezza, ma in certo modo anomali, in quanto proveniente, il primo, l'inglese Alan Gardiner, dall'ambito della Egittologia e da interessi antropologico-linguistici, l'altro, il tedesco Karl Bühler, da un approccio psicologico-linguistico in cui la lezione della Scuola di Würzburg si arricchiva di quella della linguistica funzionale. In entrambi gli studiosi la dimensione "nascosta" del linguaggio, di cui lo *inner speech* è parte essenziale, viene tematizzata attraverso la nozione di "contesto". Nella sua *Theory of Speech* (1932) Gardiner propone un modello della comunicazione nel quale la parte manifesta del linguaggio – lo *speech*, appunto – poggia su un sottofondo di pensiero/linguaggio mentale (variamente condiviso dagli utenti che partecipano a una stessa "scena" comunicativa) che condiziona la forma stessa con cui verbalizzeremo sentimenti, pensieri e emozioni; e la comprensione di queste forme verbali, spesso frantumate e apparentemente in-coerenti, si affida tutta al gioco dell'implicito. Due anni dopo, nella sua *Sprachtheorie* (1934), Bühler approfondisce i meccanismi dell'"ellissi" (cioè di un fenomeno del linguaggio manifesto che lascia trapelare il funzionamento del linguaggio interno) studiando la potenzialità semiotica della "situazione" – un concetto-chiave fino ad allora utilizzato soprattutto per lo studio degli stili comunicazionali dei popoli meno sviluppati.

Torna, come si vede, quella reciproca conversione della semantica in pragmatica e viceversa che già avevamo osservato per altri aspetti del pensiero vygotskiano: è dunque da registrare, su questo punto, una notevole corrispondenza di vedute con due grandi studiosi del linguaggio del suo tempo. Al tempo stesso, l'integrazione di questo accesso alla dimensione nascosta del linguaggio con la prospettiva genetica fa compiere alla questione un vero e proprio salto di qualità, inserendola in una compiuta "storia naturale" dello sviluppo delle funzioni psichiche superiori. E' di grande interesse rilevare come, a distanza di ottant'anni, le sfide lanciate da Vygotskij nello studio del linguaggio interno siano ancora considerate attuali e degne di essere raccolte nella chiave consentita oggi dalle conoscenze del cervello e delle tecniche di *neuro-imaging* di cui disponiamo.

4. Un ulteriore tema al quale conviene rivolgere l'attenzione è il confronto fra l'intelligenza strumentale delle scimmie antropomorfe e l'intelligenza che possiamo dire "semitica" degli umani: confronto che Vygotskij conduce, sia nel citato scritto *Strumento e simbolo*, sia nel volume *La scimmia, l'uomo primitivo e il bambino* (pubblicato nel 1930) sia in alcuni capitoli di *Pensiero e linguaggio* (1934), discutendo le ricerche svolte dallo psicologo Wolfgang Köhler a Tenerife durante la guerra e poi pubblicate, dapprima in tedesco (*Intelligenzprüfungen an Anthropoiden* 1917) poi in inglese col suggestivo titolo *The mentality of Apes* (1925). Köhler aveva mostrato coi suoi resoconti e con alcuni video ancor oggi disponibili in che modo gli scimpanzé del suo laboratorio avevano saputo utilizzare oggetti presenti nell'ambiente dell'azione come *strumenti* per raggiungere obiettivi fuori portata: ad esempio, un bastone per avvicinare alla gabbia qualcosa di appetitoso che non si poteva afferrare allungando le zampe anteriori, o delle cassette opportunamente accatastate per arrivare a una banana, sospesa a un filo a qualche metro di altezza. Corollari interessanti delle tesi di Köhler erano il vincolo della disponibilità *visiva* dell'oggetto da riconvertire a strumento; le differenze cognitive fra gli animali partecipanti all'esperimento, capaci di prestazioni ora più ora meno efficaci; l'individuazione di un *Aha-Erlebnis*, cioè di un momento in cui l'osservazione dell'ambiente intrecciata all'emozione suscitata dalla vista del cibo faceva scattare l'*Einsicht*, l'"intuizione" della possibile soluzione. Si trattava (e per certi versi ancora oggi si tratta) di ricerche di grande importanza che argomentavano in modo nuovo i termini di una possibile, relativa continuità fra intelligenza umana e intelligenza animale: una tesi che, com'è noto, aveva formato il nocciolo del grande libro di Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871, 1874²) e dei lavori del suo discepolo George Romanes, ma che era stata ridimensionata, se non proprio sostanzialmente ribaltata da Lloyd Morgan e dai suoi seguaci: il famoso "canone" formulato dall'etologo e psicologo inglese suggeriva infatti che non andavano invocate categorie "mentaliste" se gli stessi comportamenti "intelligenti" potevano essere spiegati con dispositivi psicologici di grado inferiore (ad es. la memoria associativa). Si era così avviata una fase di studi essenzialmente laboratoriali (e non più *in the wild* come nell' "aneddotica" darwiniana e romanesiana) caratterizzati da una fortissima parsimonia riguardo al lessico mentalista e da un modello rigidamente stimolo-risposta, senza concessioni interniste. Gli esperimenti di Köhler promettevano di aprire una prospettiva

nuova, salvando da una parte l'esigenza di procedure di analisi controllabili e ripetibili, dall'altra quella di valorizzare la dimensione del comportamento delle scimmie antropomorfe che sembrava mettere in gioco facoltà mentali, sia pure di tipo elementare. Lo spunto suggerito dalla *Gestalt*, relativamente al carattere "strutturale/olistico" della risposta sembrava essere la chiave di un approccio concettualmente innovativo.

La discussione che Vygotskij compie di queste ricerche include sia l'accoglimento del loro contributo scientifico, sia una personale giustificazione del perché esse non vadano interpretate nel senso di un vero e proprio continuismo interspecifico. Cruciale nel ragionamento dello psicologo russo è da una parte il significato di una circostanza messa in luce da Köhler, ovvero l'esigenza che l'oggetto suscettibile di essere utilizzato come strumento sia presente nel *campo visivo* dello scimpanzé; dall'altra il fatto che lo scimpanzé del quale viene dimostrata (sotto certe condizioni) la capacità strumentale (e quindi un certo tipo di intelligenza) sia un animale *privo di linguaggio*. Bisogna tener conto del fatto che Vygotskij utilizza qui e altrove *linguaggio* come sinonimo di linguaggio verbale, considerando dunque l'essere umano come l'unico animale linguistico del pianeta. (Oggi che il termine ha subito una profonda ristrutturazione in senso semiotico, com'è ovvio, la questione dovrebbe essere parzialmente riangolata, nella misura in cui la semiotica ha messo in luce componenti funzionali della comunicazione, da quella fatica a quella referenziale, che ci riavvicinano a molte specie animali). Sicché diviene possibile teorizzare l'esistenza di una intelligenza a-linguistica come pienamente distinta da quella linguisticizzata, esclusiva dell'essere umano. La prima sarebbe appannaggio dello scimpanzé, testimoniando dunque l'esistenza di forme elementari di comportamento mentalizzato che non richiedono l'intervento della parola (anche nel bambino piccolo, del resto, esiste una fase sensomotoria del comportamento che sembra indipendente dal linguaggio); e confermando al tempo stesso che l'avvento della parola ristruttura in modo radicale le operazioni psichiche di base. Ma rileggiamo, per comodità di esposizione, un passo del IV capitolo di *Pensiero e linguaggio* che riassume didascalicamente i punti-chiave del ragionamento vygotskiano;

«1. Il pensiero e il linguaggio hanno radici genetiche differenti.

2. Lo sviluppo del pensiero e quello del linguaggio seguono linee differenti e sono indipendenti l'uno dall'altro.

3. Il rapporto tra il pensiero e il linguaggio non è una qualche grandezza costante per tutta l'estensione dello sviluppo filogenetico.
4. Gli antropoidi mostrano un'intelligenza simile a quella umana sotto certi aspetti (rudimenti di uso degli strumenti) e un linguaggio simile a quello umano completamente sotto altri aspetti (fonetica del linguaggio, funzione emozionale e rudimenti della funzione sociale del linguaggio).
5. Gli antropomorfi non mostrano una relazione caratteristica per l'uomo, il legame stretto tra pensiero e linguaggio. L'uno e l'altro non hanno un legame in qualche modo diretto nello scimpanzé.
6. Nella filogenesi del pensiero e del linguaggio possiamo constatare una fase preverbale nello sviluppo dell'intelletto e una fase preintellettiva nello sviluppo del linguaggio» (1990/1934: 108-109).

L'asserzione (1.) è il nocciolo dell'opera vygotskiana, che trova per così dire conferma negli esperimenti di Köhler: il linguaggio verbale non è – di per sé – costitutivo dell'intelligenza, tant'è vero che sussistono forme animali e a-verbali di intelligenza, ma lo *diviene* nel quadro dell'ontogenesi *umana*, come risposta di alto livello psichico al processo di adattamento sociale. Di conseguenza (cfr. 2./3.: e qui l'attenzione si sposta sugli umani) il rapporto fra le due variabili non è fisso, non è statico, ma assume caratteristiche diverse in funzione da una parte dello sviluppo bio-cognitivo, dall'altra del percorso di socializzazione. Come va trattato, alla luce di ciò, il classico problema della continuità/discontinuità tra le specie (4.)? Si può assumere un'area di sovrapposizione fra gli umani e le scimmie antropomorfe sia nella capacità di utilizzare oggetti come strumenti (nei limiti già visti), sia nella comunanza di forme di comunicazione ristrette alla fonazione (come sapeva benissimo già Aristotele, la *phoné*, in quanto distinta dal *lógos* o linguaggio articolato, si trova in larga parte del mondo animale), alla espressione delle emozioni (ed era il tema sollevato da Darwin nel suo terzo capolavoro, *The Expression of emotions in Man and the Animals*, 1872), alla coesione sociale (basti pensare qui al ruolo del *grooming* nelle scimmie o a quello dei segnali di contatto lanciati ripetutamente nei branchi di babbuini, elefanti, lupi ecc.). Altro è invece il linguaggio verbale, che ha dalla sua un elevato grado di simbolicità e dunque può farsi carico di quel meccanismo della “generalizzazione” (quanto è a dire dell'astrazione) che Vygotskij vede inerente all'intreccio pensiero/linguaggio e quindi allo sviluppo delle funzioni psichiche superiori. In questo senso, è solo nell'individuo umano (5.) che le due componenti si intrecciano in modo interno e

costitutivo, determinando un tipo diverso di intelligenza, ignoto anche alle scimmie a noi più vicine in termini filogenetici. Quello sguanciamento dal contingente, dalla situazionalità, dalla immediata disponibilità visiva degli oggetti che tanto aveva colpito Köhler diviene in Vygotskij la chiave per accedere alla natura radicalmente e autonomamente *segnica* del linguaggio umano.

Grazie a tale inedito potere semiotico delle risorse linguistiche, l'individuo umano acquista un reale controllo del suo comportamento, nel senso che a questo annette una componente *riflessiva* che meglio potremmo definire meta-riflessiva o meta-operativa: vi è in altri termini un "distacco" del soggetto umano dall'ambiente che solo gli consente di non soggiacergli, ma di intervenire in esso per modificarlo secondo un piano. Il lavoro – secondo la ben nota indicazione di Friedrich Engels nella *Dialettica della natura* che Vygotskij riprende (è da credere) non solo per motivi diplomatici – il lavoro è pertanto il punto in cui l'intelligenza linguistica degli esseri umani si manifesta nella sua forma tipica: certo, forme di strumentalità esistono negli scimpanzé e in altre parti del regno animale (basti pensare alle famose, spettacolari dighe dei castori) ma «questi strumenti non hanno ancora un ruolo decisivo nella lotta per l'esistenza. (...) Perché ciò potesse avverarsi, doveva realizzarsi una nuova particolare forma di adattamento alla natura ancora sconosciuta alla scimmia: il lavoro» (1987/1930: 55), che è precisamente la forma evoluta di comportamento che sancisce il momento specificamente *umano* dell'intelligenza.

L'enunciato (6.) circolarmente riconduce il lettore al punto iniziale, ribadendo l'indipendenza genetica dei due fattori in gioco (pensiero e linguaggio): indipendenza che è, fra l'altro, asimmetria (anzitutto temporale) nel processo di sviluppo: il linguaggio compare nel bambino attorno all'anno, quando questi ha già alle spalle importantissime esperienze operative e conoscitive; ma è proprio grazie a questa asimmetria che, nell'individuo umano, il convergere e l'intrecciarsi dei fattori ne ridetermina *radicitus* la struttura, consentendo al bambino quel "salto" impressionante che lo caratterizza rispetto anche agli animali più simili all'uomo (e oggi sappiamo quanto simili e vicini: fino a condividere quasi il 99% dell'informazione biologica).

5. Concludo queste brevi note osservando che le riflessioni di Vygotskij sul rapporto di continuità/discontinuità fra l'essere umano e le

altre specie animali, mentre si riaggancia, nel modo che abbiamo visto, a un dibattito in corso fra psicologi e zoologi, può essere letto anche nel quadro dell'analogo dibattito apertosì in seno alla filosofia intorno a quel che forma la particolarità della nostra specie. Esso era stato aperto da Max Scheler nel saggio *Sull'idea dell'uomo* (1914) ed era continuato con crescente complessità di argomenti nella *Filosofia delle forme simboliche* di Cassirer (1923-29), in certe pagine di Heidegger, per poi continuare con *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (edito per la prima volta nel 1928 e poi lungamente rielaborato) di Helmut Plessner, più tardi con *l'Essay on Man* (1945) dello stesso Cassirer etc. È il tema che innerva fin dall'inizio l'antropologia filosofica, una forma di riflessione sull'animale e l'umano che prende lo spunto e si alimenta esattamente alle ricerche sulle capacità cognitive degli animali non umani condotte fin dall'inizio del secolo da scienziati quali Jakob von Uexküll (con la sua teoria della *Umwelt* o "ambiente soggettivo", alla base della distinzione heideggeriana fra "chiuso" e "aperto"), Karl von Frisch, con la sua stupefacente chiarificazione del linguaggio "danzato" delle api, e naturalmente Köhler coi più volte ricordati studi sulla intelligenza delle scimmie antropoidi⁹.

Questi autori approdano ciascuno, con argomenti e accenti diversi da caso a caso, a una prospettiva discontinuista, volta cioè a individuare il *quid* dell'umano, che si lascia cogliere proprio là dove sembra che gli elementi di continuità abbiano il sopravvento. Non è questa la sede, ovviamente, per proporre una rassegna delle diverse ipotesi e soluzioni. Ma, ricondotto a questo contesto (in larga misura coincidente anche sotto il profilo cronologico), Vygotskij spicca per la sua singolare capacità di risalire da dati specialistici a generali problemi di interpretazione che per molti aspetti reggono alla prova anche della prospettiva odierna, resa più sofisticata dall'accumulo di moltissimi dati nuovi e dalla lunga esperienza della etologia detta "cognitiva": quella che, soprattutto a partire dagli anni Ottanta, ha ripreso il tema delle capacità mentali e delle forme di comunicazione degli animali non umani con strumenti e tecniche impensabili solo pochi decenni or sono.

Vi sono dunque argomenti per sostenere la pertinenza del lavoro sperimentale e teorico di Vygotskij anche in ambito filosofico-

⁹ Per una sintesi della questione che qui si accenna rimando alla "Introduzione" a Genini (a.c. di) (2020).

linguistico: certo, di una filosofia del linguaggio aperta al rapporto interdisciplinare con la psicologia, con l'etologia, con la neurologia, con la semiotica della comunicazione. E' proprio in quell'orizzonte "integrato", non chiusamente specialistico, che nei momenti migliori i teorici del linguaggio riescono ad attingere, che le tesi di Vygotskij continuano a interessarci, non solo come documento storico di una eccezionale personalità intellettuale, ma anche come fonte di problemi e di domande alle quali ancora oggi cerchiamo risposte adeguate.

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7. The double unconscious. Vygotskij on language and freedom

Felice Cimatti

“Freedom is the central problem of Psychology” (Vygotsky, quoted in Ivanov, 2014: 506).

“Consciousness”, Vygotsky writes, “is speech for oneself, it originates in society with language (Marx)” (Vygotsky, 2018: 75)¹. This is the main tenet of Vygotsky socio-historical theory of human development: the origin of human mind is outside of the boundaries of the body. On the contrary, at the beginning of the process of human psycho-ontogenesis, there are social – and in particular linguistic – relations; the individual conscious mind arrives in a second time, in a chronological and psychological sense. This means that self-conscious thoughts, such thoughts that represent the singular kernel of any psychic individuality, are literally made of internalized social *external* discourses. However, what does it mean if not that the society thinks us, that anyone thinks of her/himself what the society taught her/him to think/speak?

It should be apparent that such a model of humanization contains a danger that frequently goes unnoticed. In fact, the question should be posed if something exists inside the ‘individual’ mind which is not derived from the external social relations. If one takes seriously the theory of Vygotsky the risk exists that it lets no viable space for any individual characteristic, because it seems that the mind is nothing but

¹ According to recent studies there is much suspicion about the philological trustworthiness of the existing published writings which traditionally are attributed to him (Mecacci, 2010; Yasnitsky, 2011; Yasnitsky, van der Veer, 2016). Therefore, only the English translations of two Vygotsky texts – about whom one can be sure that they effectively represent his own thought – will be utilized in the following pages, the *Notebooks* (Vygotsky, 2018) and the lectures about the *Foundations of Pedology* (Vygotsky, 2019).

the internalized social discourse: "humans are social by nature, that their development constitutes, amongst other things, the mastery of forms of activity and consciousness which have been worked out by mankind in the process of historical development" (Vygotsky 2019: 82). What is at stake exactly is if such a "mastery" is effective or, and this is even worse, if something like this can really exist. Therefore, in this essay the problem of the place of 'freedom' in Vygotsky's theory of mind will be analyzed.

Immediately after the sentence that opens this chapter Vygotsky writes that "the unconscious is what is separated from the word (Freud), consciousness is verbalized behavior (Watson)" (Vygotsky, 2018: 75; González Rey, 2017). According to Vygotsky a strong connection exists between language and consciousness; in fact, the unconscious is nothing but the mental life which is not mediated by social language. On the contrary, since consciousness is "verbalized behavior", and such a behavior is an internalized social behavior, ultimately it follows that a tension exists inside the individual mind between the social conscious mind on one part, and the unconscious individual mind on the other part. In fact, the psychological ground for individual freedom is consciousness, but consciousness is nothing but "speech for oneself", therefore an individual can be considered to be 'free' when she/he guides her/him actions and body through the verbal commands that society deposited inside her/him during the process of ontogenesis. In fact, the individual socialized mind is nothing but such a process of internalization. On the contrary the true kernel of psychic individuality "is what is separated from the word"; however, such a kernel is completely excluded by psychic life just because it is excluded by language (there is no consciousness without "inner speech"). However, what does it mean 'freedom' if not to make up by her/him *own* mind? In this case there is nothing that can be considered proper and autonomous, quite the contrary, it seems that the individual decisions are simply social decisions that take place inside an individual body. It seems that is society that 'decides' into the individual mind.

As a consequence, a tension exists between the phyco-social possibility of freedom on one side, and an individual 'freedom' that does not seem to be free at all on the other side. "A risky idea: Bio is unconscious, socio is conscious. Speech is always a dialogue (Shcherba)" (Ibidem; cfr. Zavershneva, 2014: 68). In which sense is it a "risky idea" to say that "bio is unconscious"? Bio means life, the simple individual

life beyond social relations. Therefore, it is a risky idea for a Marxist thinker to admit that the actual individual life is placed outside the social life. Vygotsky is aware that the radical equation between “consciousness” and “dialogue” threatens the very possibility of an individual psychic free life:

Consciousness is a dialogue with oneself. Already the fact that the child first listens and understands and then acquires verbal consciousness points out that: (1) Consciousness develops from experience; (2) Speaking with himself = consciously acting, the child takes the position of the other, relates to himself as to another person, imitates another person speaking to him, replaces the other person in relation to himself, learns to be another person in relation to his proper body. Consciousness is a double. Thence the child does not know “I”: “Bobby” fell, instead of “I” fell. This is possible thanks to the reversibility of the word: The reaction is a stimulus. But this is called imitation. All speech is imitation. (?) (Vygotsky, 2018: 75).

For a child to become conscious means to assume “the position of the other”, to relate “to himself as to another person”, to “imitate another person speaking to him”. The implicit problem of this approach shows itself in the question mark placed after the final sentence: “all speech is imitation”. In fact, whether all speech is truly imitation there is no place for individual freedom since freedom is inseparable from consciousness, but consciousness also means to assume “the position of the other”. On the contrary, if it is not true that all speech is imitation, then a possibility for individual freedom can exist.

Therefore, it is important to make a distinction that Vygotsky did not trace, that between the “bio [which] is unconscious” on one side, and a more specific human “unconscious” on the other side. That is, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of unconscious: such an unconscious that is common to all living beings, made of instincts and ‘automatic’ pattern of behaviors on one side; another unconscious which is uniquely human, constituted by internalized social language. Such an unconscious is paradoxically made of the social and public discourses that the child listened to during the ontogenesis. However, it is unconscious just because one can use it as a “speech for oneself” even if one does not have any control about it. The socio-historical ground for individual freedom – that is, social language – is completely outside individual control. For this reason, as the same

Vygotsky wrote, "freedom is the central problem of psychology". Because his own socio-historical theory of human development seems to exclude that a human being can be said to be free in the first sense.

Let us make clear when and why such a problem arises: "in the development of the child, what should exist at the culmination of development, as the result of development, is already present in the environment from the very beginning. And not only is it present in the environment from the very beginning, but it influences the very first footsteps of child development" (Vygotsky 2019: 78). When: to put it crudely, human being's ontogenetic mental development mainly occurs outside her/his own mind. In fact, such a development consists in the internal assimilation of external socio-historical semiotic resources: "the environment acts in relation to the development of the higher specifically human properties and the forms of activity as a source of development, i.e. interaction with the environment is the source of what the child assimilates of these properties" (p. 82). This means that at the beginning of psychological development the mind of a child lies *outside* her/his own body. The decisive step in development occurs when such external semiotic resources are internalized, that is, when they are transformed in her/his own 'internal' mental devices. In this sense is completely true that the child, and the adult that she/he will become, thinks outside her/his own brain.

Why: because not only the child's consciousness is mediated by external semiotic resources, but what she/he thinks of her/himself – self-consciousness – is an "imitation" of social external discourses. Since freedom depends on consciousness, therefore freedom depends on lack of freedom (imitation). So, in what Vygotsky defines as the "basic law" of human development is hidden a huge problem about the very possibility of existence of human freedom: "the higher psychological functions in the child, those properties are specific to humans, initially appear as forms of collective behaviour of the child, as forms of cooperation with other people, and only later do they become internal, individualized functions of the child himself" (p. 83). As the mind is the internal use of external semiotic resources, so freedom is the internal functioning of external uncontrolled devices.

Before exploring in much detail what the proposed second specifically human unconscious is, it is the case to better analyze the relationship between consciousness and freedom. The first step consists in ascertaining in which sense *infans* – a human being whose mind is not

yet mediated by socio-historical semiotic resources – actions are free. In a sense they are obviously free, as when an *infans* tries to grasp an object. Such an action is spontaneous, and goal directed. However, it is not spontaneity which is at stake in this case. Vygotsky wants to understand if the *infans* could not to try to grasp the object. In fact, properly speaking an action can be considered free only when such an action could have not been executed. Is this the case in the *infans* case? In fact, what Vygotsky calls “affective perception” (p. 94) is not free in this precise sense. When an *infant* sees an interesting object the affective reaction to such a view immediately pushes her/him to try to grasp it (Rizzolatti, Luppino 2001). In this case the *infans* action is spontaneous but not free, because the *infans* cannot not to try to grasp it. That is, her/his own action is controlled by the external stimulus, the perceived object. In this sense such an action cannot be defined as a free action. This means that the general character of *infans* behavior is “dependency upon perception” (Vygotsky 2019: 94). This means that *infans* mind does not yet dispose of free will, since her/his own actions depend on what perceptual environment presents to her/him. In fact, *infans* consciousness is guided by “affective perception”, that is, the *infans* is conscious only of what she/he directly perceives. For this reason, her/his actions cannot be free, because the *infans* has not yet reached a developmental stage where her/his consciousness is independent in respect to actual perception; this means, to be precise, that an *infans* can be aware only of what it directly perceives: “in what consist the slavery of animal perception and the freedom of man (the psychology of animals and [humans] before one year of age)” (Vygotsky 2018: 408).

On the contrary independence from direct perception is only possible when the child begins to use external language that she/he once listened from adults as a cognitive device to internally guide her/his own behavior. In this process a key role is now occupied by memory: “in early childhood, memory was subordinated to perception, and in the preschool years, what must happen is the opposite: the subordinating function of perception must become subordinated, and memory, the subordinated, must take up the subordinating position” (p. 101). In a first phase the *infans* memory was activated only by the actual perception, that is, memory cannot retrieve an experience which is not directly elicited by perception. In the new phase, such a phase that represents the dramatic socio-historical passage from animality to

humanity, it is the child independent memory that guides her/his own behavior. It is no more necessary to see in order to remember; quite the contrary, it is memory that ‘commands’ to the eyes to search what it wants to see and then to do. In this sense the child is now acting in a free way because it is no more the environment that ‘decides’ what it is the case to do. This passage is allowed by the very tight relationship now established between memory and language (*Homo sapiens* means nothing but such a relationship). Now the child can tell her/himself what to do, independently of what she/he is actually perceiving:

Inner speech continually creates a field of meanings, a psychisches Feld, which differs from the external situation; this is the strength of abstraction and freedom — we are incapable of changing the field of forces and the external Aufforderungscharakter, but by changing the inner field, we change its impact on us also from the outside. The problem of will is transferred from outside inwards, from the plane of behavior to the plane of consciousness: the creation of inner fields, for which the presence of meaningful speech is indispensable (Vygotsky 2018: 336).

In order for an action to be free it is necessary that such an action is not controlled by the perceptual field: that is, it is necessary that such a “dependency upon perception” which regulates *infans* behavior no more applies. What the child needs more exactly is an internally generated field (a “*psychisches Feld*”) which allows her/him to control what to do and what not to do. Such a field is nothing but the “inner speech” which is the very same thing than consciousness. Through the “inner speech”–consciousness the child becomes able to stop the “affective perception” push. Therefore the “*problem of will is transferred from outside inwards*”, from the perceptual field to the internal linguistic generated field. Human will is nothing but such a capacity to say, explicitly or implicitly, to oneself what to do.

What is worth remembering is that “inner speech” is the heir and internal transformation of what was once the social speech, that is, the dialogue between actual human beings. In this sense inner speech is the society inside the individual mind, it is the other inside me: “the concept — inner speech. The action of mind according to Spinoza and not the *passiones*. *Activity inside oneself*: The animal is active in the open. And activity of a new type. Its source are two persons [...]. New brain structures” (p. 358). “Inner speech” means “activity inside oneself” while the non-human animal only “is active in the open”, that is, in the

external environment that ‘controls’ its behaviors. The “ingrowing” (p. 120) of the external semiotic resource literally ‘produces’ a completely new mental space, a space which did not existed before such an operation where external “activity turns inward” (p. 121).

The Buridan situation: Man differs from the ass not because (Descartes) he violates necessity by his free will but by the fact that he will act with the same necessity, but *his* necessity, one that is determined in another way: recognized necessity. For him the choice is not <the same> because of the generalization: Perish or stay alive (man thinks — *pro re cogitante*). The stronger affect (the preservation of life) is brought into play and overcomes the equilibrium of the two weaker ones because man understands the *meaning of his inertia and the equilibrium and the danger*: Something must be decided. The ability to make *whatever* decision, to find the motivation *not in the field* but *above it*; the choice that determines the strength of the motive here decides the matter. *Ergo*, in man as a *res cogitans*, develops a *new relation to the situation* in comparison with the animal. The novelty is that thinking (the semantic field) *introduces a new affect*, reorganizes the relationships of the affects, seemingly violates the laws of affective necessity, but in actual fact leads to a higher form — to recognized necessity. Thinking preserves but reorganizes the affects, their *ordo et connexion* (p. 409).

In this quote the connection between consciousness, memory, inner speech, and freedom is apparent. Freedom means that one is not obliged to act in a unique way, as it is the case for the *infans* or the animal in respect to the perceptual field; in order to have such a possibility one has to have at its own disposal a cognitive internal device which ‘produces’ more than one possible environment where an action can take place; such an internal device is “inner speech”; “free will” is nothing but the uniquely human linguistic-mediated capacity to ‘produce’ possible worlds; such a capacity, in turn, implies that child’s memory is not obliged to remember only what is immediately elicited by the actual perceptual situation:

During infancy, consciousness is largely undifferentiated: the infant certainly has memory (and in fact, the child has a great deal to take in and to remember, e.g., the faces of caregivers, feeding routines, the precise details of the surroundings, voices, etc.). But that memory is not separable from other activities of consciousness; it only occurs in conjunction with perception as stimulus and affect as a response, and

as a result, it cannot be voluntarily called to mind: an infant cannot simply decide to remember something and then remember it without any external stimulus at all. In other words, the function is not externally differentiated by volition (Vygotsky 2019: 86).

The psycho-historical prerequisite to become a living being capable of free – and not only spontaneous – actions is “inner speech”. Such a particular form of language completely changes the human psychological situation in respect to non-human animals: “the concept already contains all freedom [...]. Animals are slaves of their visual field” (Vygotsky 2018: 134). While in *infans* and animal mind perception immediately converts into action, in the human adult mind between them there is the diaphragm represented by the “concept” (that is, the linguistic meaning) which makes possible to stop the immediate bodily response to perceptual field. In such a “inner field” lies the psychological possibility of freedom, that is, the possibility of ‘deciding’ an action which is not directly suggested by the perceptual environment. That is, the possibility to stop a spontaneous action.

However, at this point Vygotsky realizes that such a solution probably produces more problems than what it is presumed to solve. In fact, immediately after having established such a connection between “concept” and “freedom” he adds: “the concept = the recognition of necessity = freedom” (*Ibidem*). Now “concept” means “the recognition of necessity”; but necessity exactly means that no freedom is possible. However, and this is quite a further surprising equation, such a recognition moreover means “freedom”. In this passage the legacy of a philosopher much loved by Vygotsky is apparent. Spinoza, in *Ethica*, explicitly denies the very possibility of human freedom:

Men are deceived in thinking themselves free, a belief that consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined. Therefore, the idea of their freedom is simply the ignorance of the cause of their actions [quod suarum actionum nullam cognoscant causam]. As to their saying that human actions depend on the will, these are mere words without any corresponding idea [verba sunt, quorum nullam habent ideam]. For none of them knows what the will is and how it moves the body, and those who boast otherwise and make up stories of dwelling places and habitations of the soul provoke either ridicule or disgust (Spinoza 2002: 264).

In this famous quote from Spinoza *Ethica* one can find at least two elements worth considering from a Vygotskyan point of view: i) freedom is not a metaphysical endowment of human beings. Vygotsky, like Spinoza, is a monist, he does not believe in the dualism of matter and mind. Therefore if “freedom” has to mean something real, such a meaning must be compatible with monism. Consequently, one has to elaborate a materialistic theory of human freedom. Vygotsky faces a double challenge: to maintain a strong materialistic stance on one side; to preserve a psychological viable notion of “freedom” on the other side. In order to keep united both needs Vygotsky developed a linguistic theory of freedom. To be free means to be able to construct – through “inner speech” – an internal thought-space where different courses of actions, even if implicitly, can be hypothesized. “Freedom” is nothing but such a space of possible actions. The advantage of such a theory is that it is fully compatible with materialistic monism. Thinking is not made of some mysterious stuff like the *res cogitans*. The relationship between thought and word that is manifest in social discourse maintains itself in inner speech too: “speech with a fundamentally other relationship between the phasic and semic elements. But speech *does not at all disappear*. Consciousness does not completely evaporate and does not disappear in pure spirit. But whereas in external speech the thought becomes embodied in the word, in inner speech the word *dies* and gives birth to the thought thought by *pure meanings*” (p. 283). However, this advantage brings with itself the major risk of reversing in its own contrary. In fact, as the *infans* does not have any control over the social language she/he is passively exposed to from her/him own birth, so it happens with the “inner speech” which impersonally substantiates her/his thoughts. In both cases the *infans/adult* does not master language, either external or internal.

ii) This point allows us to pass to the second worth considering element which is contained in the previous Spinoza quote: “as to their saying [quod aiunt] that human actions depend on the will, these are mere words without any corresponding idea”, that is, these words about ‘freedom’ and ‘free will’ are nothing but meaningless noises. In fact, in which sense someone can consider her/himself being free if all of her/his actions are determined by a cognitive device upon which no one can exercise any control? As Spinoza put in a definitive way, human beings “are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined”. However, such an ignorance is

specifically a linguistic ignorance. That is, human beings keep on talking about ‘freedom’ without being aware of what they are really saying.

That is, Spinoza is somewhat referring to what previously has been called the *human* unconscious, which is different from the ‘common’ animal unconscious. Such an unconscious is the “ingrown” social language, whose syntactic and lexical devices are completely beyond human explicit control (Chomsky, 1972). This simply means that we all adult competent speakers speak ‘our’ mother - tongue without having the least idea of how such a language works. This is the peculiar human unconscious, an unconscious where without us even noticing settle themselves social discourses, linguistic clichés, death metaphors that literally think for us. To be more precise, according to Spinoza we are nothing but such an inattentiveness toward language. Vygotsky is aware of this problem, that risks undermining his project to tackle “the central problem of psychology”, that is, the problem of developing a psychological theory of freedom. Let us come back to the nexus between “inner speech”, consciousness and freedom: “the content of the psychological experience: develops *from* what the words-signs *refer* to, from what they indicate. Hence, the content revives the situation. The animal has no content but signals. In general, *there is no content in mind without signs*” (Vygotsky 2018: 119). In this quote Vygotsky explains why language functioning is not perceived, because we all forget the mediation of linguistic signs and believe to simply stay in contact with the “content” of them, the disembodied thoughts. However, such a “content” is inseparable from the “words-signs” of whom they represent the necessary physical ground.

Therefore, we are aware of thought, but completely unaware of how such a thought arrived at ‘our’ mind: “unconsciously I occupy linguistic positions. I must realize that” (p. 313). This is a very important statement on the part of Vygotsky because it can help us to understand how he can put together the idea of freedom on one side, and the opposite Spinoza’s idea of the inexistence of such freedom on the other side. The linguistic position anyone occupies is such a position where one believes being on complete control on language and thoughts. However, such a belief is nothing but the unconscious removal of the opposite situation, where one is at the mercy of a social linguistic device of whom functioning is completely unaware.

If now we come back to Vygotsky reader of Spinoza (Derry, 2006; Bento, Boessio 2014; Toassa, Bonadia de Oliveira 2018), it becomes less difficult to understand such a strong connection that he posed between "human slavery and human freedom" (Vygotsky 2018: 285).

We can now distinguish between two different conceptions of "freedom" in Vygotsky. The first one is that based on the equation between "inner speech" and freedom: "all (verbal) thinking of cultural man is a system of external speech mechanisms ingrown in consciousness" (p. 118). In fact, consciousness is nothing but such speech mechanism. To be self-conscious is to be able to use such a mechanism. Freedom is the capacity to entertain a thought which is not elicited by the perceptual environment in the first place:

Verbal thinking — [...] when the external mechanisms (speech) become internal (intellectualized). The advantage of speech for thinking is that (1) in making thinking an external activity, it makes it possible to master thinking, and (2) *most importantly*, by creating external mechanisms subordinated to the will, it makes them grow into consciousness and converts them into internal mechanisms. Man masters himself from the outside and changes his whole inner world. The mistake that must be avoided and which we committed: (1) the instrumental act creates what the natural acts cannot provide, a *neoformation* [...]; (2) [...] The [...] [last] stage is the *environment in us*, culture that has been absorbed, language that has become thinking, history within psychology (pp. 118-119).

What it is important to stress is that when "verbal thinking" 'thinks' of itself – that is, when "inner speech" is used to speak of the same "inner speech" – such a mental act coincides with "will". That is, "will" is nothing than "inner speech". There is no mental autonomous entity in Vygotsky's psychology (no *res cogitans*). Such a passage from the external makes possible to the human being to 'master' her/his own behaviors. In fact, "inner speech" = "free will" can 'observe' the body actions from an external point of view, then it can 'master' them. However, the further equation is that "free will" is the same that there "is the *environment in us*". One is free if and only if it is the very same thing with the environment where it is supposed to act freely. But an action is free if and only if it is not the same thing with the environment where it is supposed that such an action should take place. How does Vygotsky try to solve such a paradox?

If the elementary concept contains the *possibility* of idealism, this means that it includes the rational core of idealism, i.e., freedom (the break with life — the *flight* — the liberation). [*If*] there is a certain bit of *fantasy* in the general concept, this means that there is [also] a bit of freedom [...]. The theory of the intellect's indirect, zig-zag – like, twofold approach in the taking of a copy (a concept) implies: *toward* the real thing and *away from* it, i.e., toward the dialectics of *necessity and freedom*, i.e., the unity of the particular and the universal, of the thing and the idea. It *includes* the flight from life (i.e., toward freedom). *The genuine meaning of idealism, which turned concepts into isolated beings (numbers, ideas), free from material necessity, consists in the theory of the freedom that is contained in the most elementary concept* (just like the rational core of the theory of the freedom of will is the recognition of necessity). [...] *Thus: the central idea:* In the simplest generalization, in the most elementary general idea there is a certain bit of *fantasy* = freedom. In the concept, *there is* freedom (p. 134).

First, Vygotsky is forced to assume a strange position in respect to idealism, what should represent the evil for a materialist monist. However, Vygotsky needs to resume to a “possibility of idealism” to keep open the logical space for freedom. In fact, a necessary world excludes any edge for freedom (this is the first part of Spinoza legacy). However, such a space is nothing but a linguistic space, that is, “inner speech”. Such “verbal thinking” allows “the flight from life”, that is, the possibility to internally elaborate a *detour* in respect to actual perceptual environment. For this reason, “fantasy = freedom”: in fact, what is it fantasy if not the possibility to use “inner speech” – “in the concept, *there is* freedom” – to elaborate different world scenarios in respect to the actual one?

The second part of Spinoza legacy has to do with the acknowledgement that such a “freedom” is illusory, because it is just a *linguistic* freedom which does not overtake the necessity that rules the world. However, such an acknowledgment is the only freedom of whom a human animal can make experience of. In fact, there is a huge epistemological difference between being simply without freedom – as in the case of a non-human animal and an *infans* – and to be aware of being without freedom. According to Vygotsky, human freedom lies in the gap between these two ways of absence of freedom. In a short series of very interesting notes about the psychology of chess, Vygotsky points out such a distinction. It is worth noticing that he is

discussing the case of chess, that is, a situation where the actual moves of the players are ruled by very tight and unescapable rules. Chess perfectly exemplifies what it is human freedom: awareness of necessity or variations around what cannot be changed. In a schema of one of these notes Vygotsky puts in two different columns what pertains to *intuition* and what pertains to *reasoning*. The head of the first column is a short sentence written in Deutsch: *Es denkt* (Id thinks). It is apparent the reference to the Freud concept of "Es" as it is discussed in *The Ego and the Id* (Freud, [1923] 1961). The *Es* is unconscious. Such a thinking is not personal, quite the contrary is a thinking without a thinker. On the other column, instead, is written *Ich denke* (I think). The possibility of freedom only consists in the passage from *Es denkt* to *Ich denke*. Another difference between these two ways of thinking is that the first one – the animal one – "does not depend upon volition" while the other, the linguistic mediated thinking, on the contrary requires an "enormous tension" (p. 384). Why such a tension? Just because the "verbal thinking" in respect to instinctive way of thinking is unnatural and artificial.

Human freedom places itself at the mobile intersection between *Es* and "inner speech". But what kind of relationship establishes itself between conscious and unconscious? Vygotsky criticizes Freud because according to him he maintains the unconscious into a separate position in respect of consciousness and language. Vygotsky wants to historicize the unconscious, that is, he wants to extend the boundaries of consciousness, and consequently to extend the boundaries of freedom. According to Freud's theory "the unconscious does not develop. At any rate, it does not participate in the developmental course of consciousness" (p. 391). In fact, only if the unconscious can be historicized the process of consciousness-freedom can take place. What Vygotsky wants to stress is that a fixed unconscious means the negation of any possibility of freedom on the part of human animal:

The relationship between Ego and Id [*Es*], disturbed in the psycho-neurosis, is derivative from the (conscious) development of the Ego and its relationship with the external world; contra the *Lust-* und *Realitätsprinzip*: their unity; contra naturalism and metaphysics — pro historicism (humanized nature); the unconscious evolves from the development of consciousness; becoming consciously aware of the affect (p. 391).

The key notion is that of “humanized nature”, that is, the process of becoming aware of natural bonds. Such an awareness coincides with the possibility to put them into brackets, that is, to acquire – through the mediation of “inner speech” – what he called “the flight from life”, from natural and fixed behaviors. For this reason Vygotsky’s theory is critical in respect to Freud, because his vision of human nature is meta-historical and does not leave any space for change: “Freud examines consciousness in light of the theory of the unconscious; we examine the unconscious in light of the theory of consciousness” (p. 393), that is, in the light of a theory of freedom. A last example can make clearer the subtle but decisive passage from *Es denkt* to *Ich denke*, an example relative to the traditional Jewish humourism. There is much difference – human freedom is nothing but such a difference – between being coward and to be aware of being coward.

Dynamics in thinking: freedom is born in thought; [...] Ergo, thinking has its own dynamics; thoughts get on with each other but brutally clash with things; in thinking there are remnants of the emotions about things: the reservations in Jewish parlance; the thought about death; it is horrifying to think, etc. But most important – it is another dynamics: It is absurd if a person is afraid to think about something awful, i.e., when he transfers the emotion caused by real things to thinking: Imagined dogs do not bite.

The descendence. The new transformation of the dynamics of the field, [first] transformed into the dynamics of thinking, [and then back] into the dynamics of the field. The difficulty is precisely to transform the dynamics of thought with its freedom into the dynamics of the action [...].

Things do not change because we are thinking of them, the affect in the concept becomes active (cf. perception and the breakup of the structure): It becomes part of another relationship thanks to the fact that the thing acquires meaning when it becomes part of the structure of the generalization: Recognized cowardice determines our attitude to it (shame) (p. 410).

In this example the affect of shame is the condition of becoming free, because if it is true that “things do not change because we are thinking of them”, it is also true that “recognized cowardice determines our attitude to shame”. Freedom is nothing but the attempt to stay between these two truths. In conclusion, human freedom is based on language, in particular “verbal thinking” on one side: however, it

is also a fight against the slaving unconscious inclination of language on the other side. One can reach freedom only fighting against the very same device that allows us to become free.

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8. Argomentare in gruppo per sviluppare ragionamento e conoscenze (Arguing in groups to improve reasoning and knowledge)

Clotilde Pontecorvo

8.1. Premessa biografica

Nel corso della mia prima formazione filosofica, a metà degli anni cinquanta, fu molto importante l'approccio dialogico di matrice socratica, che mi fu trasmesso nel seminario guidato da Guido Calogero. In questo seminario a cui partecipavano meno di dieci studenti, tutti svolgevamo un ruolo attivo: io lessi in greco (nella edizione francese delle "Belles Lettres") un paio di dialoghi socratici contro i sofisti e ne riferii al gruppo in cui ognuno faceva qualcosa di analogo. Da questa esperienza formativa trassi lo spunto per studiare il ruolo della discussione nell'apprendimento. Dopo la laurea e dopo un'esperienza di qualche anno come docente di Filosofia in diverse scuole superiori, cominciai a leggere Vygotskij, in particolare *Pensiero e Linguaggio*, mentre partecipavo a un gruppo di ricerca interdisciplinare con docenti di scuola elementare (GUS, 1979) promosso da due fisici romani (Paolo Guidoni e Matilde Missoni), Lydia Tornatore (grande pedagogista) e un gruppo di docenti di scuola elementare di Roma e di Firenze. Lo scopo del gruppo era quello di sviluppare un curricolo integrato per l'educazione scientifica di base (intesa in senso lato includendo anche alfabetizzazione, arte e studi sociali). Avendo studiato la Psicologia Socio-Culturale, anche nei contributi di M. Cole e di J. Bruner insieme con l'approccio sociolinguistico di Cazden e Mehan, mi dedicai allo studio dell'interazione sociale e della discussione collettiva come strumenti per l'apprendimento. Una delle prime idee sul ruolo dell'argomentare mi venne quando una bambina di due anni, ospite a casa mia con i genitori, dopo aver ricevuto da mio marito un gelato di crema e cioccolato, vedendo entrare sua madre (statunitense, salutista) che era molto contraria ai cibi industriali, ne precedette l'intervento critico,

affermando con sicumera: “**ma** la crema fa bene”, evitando qualsiasi riferimento al cioccolato. (Pontecorvo, 2017)

8.2. Un curricolo sulle trasformazioni biologiche

Il mio primo campo di ricerca fu una classe elementare condotta da una docente molto capace (Delia Castiglia) che era componente del gruppo GUS. Dalla trascrizione delle discussioni su argomenti di Biologia che avevano avuto luogo nella classe, da me lette ripetutamente e analizzate con molta cura, ricavai il risultato che tra i bambini di nove anni, con pochissimi interventi della docente, si poteva sviluppare un ragionamento collettivo, sollecitato dalla cooperazione e dall’opposizione di alcuni allievi e dalla capacità di tutti di collegarsi all’intervento altrui.

All’interno di queste discussioni di classe, si potevano cogliere sia sviluppi del ragionamento sia crescita di conoscenze. Presentai la ricerca alla riunione fondante della EARLI, nel 1985, a Lovanio (Belgio) con relative pubblicazioni in italiano (Pontecorvo, 1985) e in inglese (Pontecorvo, 1987). Da quel primo studio, cominciai a comprendere il ruolo dell’argomentare in un contesto sociale.

Riporto in quello che segue le trascrizioni di tre segmenti delle discussioni in classe, conclusive rispetto alle attività sulle trasformazioni sperimentate.

1 - Trasformazione del pane

Segmento A

Docente (Delia): E perché si secca il pane?

Sa.: Perché...Perché...

Mar.: Perché rimase troppo chiuso.

Val.: Se tu lo lasci...

Ric.: Se rimane chiuso, si mantiene perché...

Sa.: Tutta la mollica...Delia non vale...

Val.: Il pane veramente, se lo lasci così, sulla credenza si secca, perché c’è l’aria che lo indurisce.

Sa.: Gli assorbe la morbidezza.

Doc.: Che cos’è che agisce sul pane?

Val.: L’aria... se tu lo lasci in una busta chiusa.

Sim.: ...Non succede...

Em.: ...Si ammuffisce...si ammuffisce.

Val.: Sì, se lo tiene per tanto tempo, ma se lo tiene per mezzo giorno...
 (...)

La riflessione della classe inizia con l'intervento della docente e prosegue in modo cooperativo tra i soli bambini fino a che emerge il riferimento all'aria (voce n. 7) che non c'è nella busta chiusa (voce n. 10).

Segmento B

(42) Fra.: Prima io stavo dicendo che dentro la busta di plastica il pane non è che si secca, è che si ammuffisce perché se tu ti metti una busta di carta in testa non è che soffochi...

(43) So.: No, di carta no, ma di plastica sì...

(44) Gio.: No di carta. Sì, di plastica sì.

(45) Fra.: Se tu metti una busta di carta no, non soffochi.

(46) Sa.: Adesso ho capito...Delia...ho capito perché ammuffisce, perché dentro la busta di plastica l'aria non c'è, non c'è aria, non circola aria!

Il discorso sul pane si rimette in gioco da parte di Francesca (voce n. 42), che contrappone gli effetti divergenti della busta di plastica rispetto a quella di carta, fino a che il discorso sul pane si conclude (voce n. 46), dopo un implicito riferimento a una raccomandazione, forse appresa in famiglia.

Nella seconda discussione conclusiva sulle trasformazioni, una bambina introduce il tema di come cambia la pasta durante la cottura. La docente Delia raccoglie il tema introducendo l'espressione scientifica "dare una spiegazione". Riporto di seguito la sequenza interattiva sul tema:

2 - Cottura della pasta

(1) Mo.: Perché la pasta nell'acqua tu la togli ha cambiato grossezza?

(2) Doc.: Perché, lei chiede...c'è qualcuno che le vuole dare una spiegazione?

(3) Val.: io credo che sia...che stando nell'acqua, l'acqua penetra nella pasta e quindi la gonfia.

(4) Gio.: Quello che volevo dire io.

(5) Cl.: È come se fosse una spugna...assorbe tutta l'acqua e piano piano si gonfia.

(6) Doc.: Non parlare tutti insieme.

- (7)En.: Sì, ma non è una spiegazione logica quella che entra l'acqua,
voglio capire come entra dentro.
- (8) Doc.: E come entrerà?
- (9) Gia.: Ci stanno i pori, come nella pelle ci stanno i pori!
- (10)Doc.: Qualcuno dice che si ammorbidisce.
- (11) En.: Sì, loro dicono che si ammorbidisce, però devono avere
un'idea per dire che si ammorbidisce: come si ammorbidisce?
- (...)
- (19) En.: Ma l'acqua che fa allo spaghetti per farlo diventare morbido?
- (...)
- (21) En.: Ma come la ammorbidisce?
- (...)
- (38) En.: Ma è possibile che tutti dicano idee però non danno la spiega-
zione!

Questo segmento è caratterizzato dai ripetuti interventi di Enzo (voci n. 7, 11, 19, 21 e 38), che sostiene la discussione perché non è mai soddisfatto dalle spiegazioni che propongono gli altri bambini. Enzo si assume, così, un ruolo di "scettico", il quale vuole sapere **come** avviene il fenomeno dell'ammorbidente della pasta. Le risposte offerte dai bambini non lo convincono.

8.3. Sviluppi della ricerca

Per i ricercatori che aderiscono a un quadro teorico socio-culturale e riconoscono il fondamento interattivo delle funzioni psichiche superiori, la crescita cognitiva è vista come una padronanza progressiva di partecipazione ad attività sociali; l'espressione di processi cognitivi nella loro occorrenza spontanea ne è una delle imprese più difficili e intriganti.

Lo sviluppo cognitivo non ha luogo all'interno della mente individuale, piuttosto si tratta di processi sociali di miglioramento del contributo ad attività interattive. Ne consegue che è l'insieme dell'attività a diventare il centro dell'analisi. In questa prospettiva, un'attenzione particolare va rivolta alle risorse semiotiche e culturali che caratterizzano lo svolgimento delle attività sociognitive. Un ruolo potente va attribuito al linguaggio, visto nel suo progresso verso un insieme complesso di giochi linguistici socialmente condivisi.

Su questa base teorica condussi una ricerca con Margherita Orsolini e Maria Amoni (1989), in una sezione della scuola dell'infanzia di un quartiere periferico di Roma con bambini di cinque anni in vari contesti sociali: a coppie, in due coppie, in metà classe, tutta la classe. Alla classe, furono proposte due attività didattiche: una, letteraria (lettura e discussione della storia di Tolstoj, "Masha e l'Orso") e l'altra, scientifica, che cominciava con legnetti, bulloni e piccoli piani dati a coppie con il compito di farli stare in equilibrio allo scopo di costruire una bilancia essenziale. Dopo un'accurata trascrizione dell'interazione linguistica nei diversi contesti sociali, analizzammo i discorsi infantili con il metodo di analisi sequenziale di Bakeman, Gottman (1986); così emersero diverse modalità discorsive che caratterizzano i modi della costruzione mentale collettiva.

Il metodo di analisi prevede l'applicazione di un sistema di categorie per ogni coppia di enunciati che si distinguono in 'scambi di convergenza', 'scambi di problematizzazione' e 'scambi oppositivi'.

Gli Scambi di Convergenza possono essere i seguenti:

Semplice Risposte - CS

Espressioni di consenso per una precedente asserzione - **CA**

Ripetizione o riformulazione di un enunciato precedente - **CR**

Asserzioni che continuano un discorso precedente, elaborandone l'informazione - **CE**

Risposte che aggiungono un'elaborazione alla richiesta della domanda - **CD**

Richieste di chiarimento, o di specificazione - **CD**

Ne riporto di seguito un'applicazione a un segmento di discussione sull'equilibrio (Amoni, Orsolini e Pontecorvo, 1987)

3 - Si discute di equilibrio tra quattro bambini (Walter, Francesco, Flavia e Sabrina)

Si discute se si può tenere il piano con le mani, se si tratta di una azione lecita per produrre l'equilibrio.

(162) Wal.: Vale tutto, meno che non falla aregge. Vale tutto, l'importante è falla aregge in equilibrio; no, l'importante è non mettele sotto. Vero, maè?

(163) Fra.: Io sto con lui. **CA**

- (164) Doc.: Francesco, ascolta.
- (294) Wal.: Ah, io con la bilancina...lei Sabrina, veramente, c'ha messo un coso...
- (295) Fla.: Un gancetto. **CE**
- (296) Wal.: Un gancetto grande in mezzo e quella s'è aretta. Vero, Sabri?

I bambini stanno elaborando le regole relative alla accettabilità dell'equilibrio ottenuto. Il verbo usato da loro è '*areggersi*', espressione derivata dal dialetto romanesco.

Nelle discussioni sulla storia di Masha è frequente il collegamento tra diversi contributi con il riferimento a eventi che nella narrazione sono temporalmente connessi. In questo caso, la sequenza narrativa costituisce uno sfondo di informazioni condivise che permette un riferimento implicito a legami temporali. I contributi **CE** rispondono a una richiesta di spiegazione da parte della docente e, nello stesso tempo, elaborano la spiegazione fornita da un parlante precedente; di ciò riportiamo due esempi della discussione con metà della classe:

8.4. Cooperazione nella ricostruzione narrativa

4 - a completamento di frasi

- (137) Doc.: Ma perché Masha voleva scappare secondo voi?
- (138) A.O.: Perché non je piaceva anda' dentro casa. **CE**
- 139 - Pie: Perché voleva vedere il nonnino e la nonnina. **CE**
- 140 - Doc.: Voleva rivedere il nonnino e la nonnina... **CR**
- 141 - F.P.: E perché non je piaceva vivere insieme a quella bestia. **CE**
- 142 - A.O.: Non le piaceva questa casetta perché c'abitava l'orso e non ce voleva abita' più.

In questo frammento di discorso, F.P. aggiunge un secondo motivo a quello proposto da A.O. e da Pie; A.O. rispondendo alla richiesta della docente, aggiunge nuovi elementi alla spiegazione di F.P.

Nella discussione sulla storia, i contributi **CE** sono costituiti da asserzione su eventi condivisi o da narrazione di eventi personali. Queste asserzioni non richiedono una risposta ma un semplice riconoscimento (**CA**). Questo è in parte chiarito dal fatto che i contributi **CE** rispondono ad una richiesta della docente di parlare o di continuare a parlare intorno ad un argomento; sono pertanto rivolti sia ad un altro bambino

che alla docente. Il bambino mostra alla docente il proprio sapere, servendosi del contributo di un parlante precedente.

Va sottolineato che le domande **CD** sono contingenti ad un contributo che precede e non forniscono nuove informazioni; sono del tutte diverse dalla tradizione scolastica in cui l'intervento valutativo della docente completa la ben nota **tripletta** (domanda/risposta/valutazione – Sinclair, Coulthard, 1975).

Scambi di problematizzazione

Correzione e ridefinizione di un enunciato precedente - **PD**

Asserzione che introduce una nuova informazione come parziale alternativa ad una precedente - **PN**

Richiesta di spiegare un'asserzione precedente - **PR**

5) dalla discussione di tutta la classe sulla storia di Masha

24 - Doc.: Come è la storia vera, quella che vi ho raccontato io?

25 - Fab.: Che un giorno le amichette je dice che andavano a coje i funghi nel bosco e dopo chiama...**PN**

26 - F.S. dice: Stai attenta! **CE**

27 - Fab.: Chiamavano anche Masha e il nonno dice “stai attenta che ti puoi anche perdere nel bosco.” **PN**

28 - Fau.: E ma io dico...

29 - Doc.: Invece Masha che fa? **PR**

30 - Fra.: S’è persa!

31 - F.S.: S’è persa!

32 - Doc.: Eh, si è persa!

33 - Fau.: E io dico così...che nonno dice “stai attenta...**PN**

34 - Doc.: Francesco ascolta.

35 - Fau.: ...stai sempre con le amichette, se no ti perderai.” **PN**

Il contributo di Fausto (33 - 35) aggiunge una nuova informazione all'enunciato di Fab di cui costituisce una parziale correzione. I contributi tipo **PN** possono spostare il focus e forniscono un'alternativa parziale ad un intervento precedente; sono accompagnate spesso da una delle seguenti espressioni: *io dico che, oppure, invece, può esse che*; sono espressioni che segnalano un distanziamento dal discorso. Rendono discutibili le asserzioni precedenti.

Scambi oppositivi

Negazione di un precedente enunciato senza dare giustificazioni - **ON**

Asserzioni che contraddicono una precedente, apportando una giustificazione - **OC**

Contro-opposizione: negazione di una predente opposizione dando una giustificazione - **OO**

La funzione di negazione è veicolata da aspetti prosodici e da espressioni avversative (*ma...però...*) o da verbi enfatici. Si può avere la ripetizione con tono esagerato di un intervento precedente. Vedi esempio che segue dalla discussione della classe sulla storia di *Masha e l'Orso*. (Orsolini, Pontecorvo e Amoni, 1989)

6 - collaborazione con scambi oppositivi

La docente ha chiesto: "Che cosa avrebbe dovuto fare l'orso per essere furbo?"

206 Fab.: Sente el profumo de Masha lu' guarda dentro al cesto e vede Masha.

207 Docente: Ah, sente il peso e sente l'odore!

208 Fed.: Ma... ma lei...**OC**

209 Fau.: Seee, ma mica el lupo c'ha un naso così grande che c'ha due palle del naso suo così e così. (ride)

210 Doc.: Dice che non lo può sentì perché...

211 Fed.: Poi ci ha l'occhi...**OO**

212 Fab.: Ma quando fava, quando passava, andava de fori al cesto, passava davanti al naso del lupo e Masha diceva "mi so messa in un bel guaio!"

213 Doc.: Mi sono messa in un bel guaio, diceva Masha? Ah, perché passava davanti...il lu...l'orso passava proprio davanti al cesto, sotto, proprio vicino al naso dell'orso il cesto stava e allora, dice lei che si poteva sentire l'odore. **ON**

214 Fau.: Nooo!

215 Doc.: Federica dice che si poteva sentire il peso, perché pesava di più. **OC**

216 Fau.: Seee! L'orso è più forte di una persona. Se l'orso è forte! Scusa! **OO**

217 Fed.: Ma perché cosa, ma perché cosa, come si chiama?

218 Doc.: Masha.

219 Fed.: Masha era più pesante certo che el lupo non ce la faceva più a tené el cesto, allora lo p...lo posò vicino 'a porta, poi vede...**OO**

Tali modalità si presentavano in varie forme: il collegamento naturale tra un'affermazione e quella successiva, come cooperazione nella produzione di frasi semanticamente contingenti; era presente anche il ruolo dell'opposizione che non richiedeva nessun intervento adulto e che poteva anche essere seguita da una contro opposizione di tipo argomentativo. Questi diversi tipi di sequenze caratterizzavano la costruzione cognitiva del gruppo, favorendo la produzione e lo sviluppo delle argomentazioni.

8.5. L'indagine sul ragionamento storico in quarta elementare

Condussi una ulteriore attività di indagine con Girardet e Zuccher-maglio (1993). Lo studio coinvolse una intera classe di quarta elemen-tare. Gli allievi furono suddivisi in piccoli gruppi autonomi di quattro/cinque unità, ciascuno con un registratore da gestire senza alcun intervento adulto. Fu dato a ciascun gruppo lo stesso testo, da interpretare, di uno storico romano del IV secolo d.C. (Ammiano Marcellino) che descriveva gli Unni e gli Alani, popoli barbari che erano in guerra con Roma. Per l'analisi del ragionamento storico effettuato nei diversi gruppi, utilizzammo la analisi della argomentazione di Toulmin (1975) che si riferiva all'opera fondamentale di Perelman e Olbrechts(1958). Da questi testi trassi il suggerimento di distinguere gli enunciati discorsivi in: asserzione, giustificazione e appelli ai fondamenti delle stesse. Con questo semplice schema di analisi, categoriz-zammo gli enunciati dei diversi gruppi dopo una accurata trascrizione delle registrazioni. Abbiamo così individuato forme di ragionamento controfattuale, prodotte spontaneamente dai bambini partecipanti.

In tal modo si identificò la presenza di forme di ragionamento controfattuale, che si verifica quando si evidenziano delle conseguenze che negano la validità di un'asserzione; un esempio di tale ragionamento è quando dicono che lo storico non dice la verità, perché se i popoli da lui descritti fossero stati veramente bestiali come lui dice, lui non li avrebbe potuti osservare senza perdere la vita. Questo tipo di ragionamento è essenziale per la comprensione di fenomeni storici che si interpretano in una prospettiva di verosimiglianza e non con il nesso causale che collega i fatti fisico-naturali, secondo la distinzione operata da Bruner (1986).

Nel discutere sulla attendibilità del testo, **Tommaso (7.a.)** si basa sul fatto che lo storico, ignorando il destinatario, non può scrivere falsità:

- 1 - però non è una cosa abbastanza assicurata - **valutazione**
- 2 - perché forse lui non può dire cose a caso, a vanvera - **appello**
- 3 - perché lui non può sapere a chi andrà a finire questo documento - **fondamento giustificativo**
- 4 - quindi deve dire la verità e non può scrivere cose finte - **asserzione**

Altri partecipanti si riferiscono ai caratteri delle popolazioni per giustificare i loro comportamenti non civili, come argomenta **Giulia (7.b.)**, appellandosi a una specie di relativismo culturale:

- 1 - forse queste persone fin da piccole erano state abituate a vivere così - asserzione
- 2 - perché, date le circostanze che vivevano in posti molto risicati, brutti - giustificazione
- 3 - così, forse non avevano la possibilità di essere civilizzati - asserzione
- 4 - perché tra generazioni avevano imparato a stare così, allora... - giustificazione

Nel 1991 ho fatto un incontro fondamentale con l'antropologa e sociolinguista dell'*UCLA* Elinor Ochs a un simposio della conferenza *IS-CAR* tenuta a Lahti (Finlandia). Dopo questo incontro indirizzai la mia ricerca nello studio di cene familiari con il metodo della analisi della conversazione che cercai di imparare come metodologia all'interno del dottorato che coordinavo allora, rivolto a cinque dottorandi (Arcidiacono, Fatigante, Giorgi, Liberati, Sterponi) con la collaborazione della ricercatrice Alessandra Fasulo e un numero variabile di laureati e laureandi.

La ricerca ha prodotto un buon numero di articoli scientifici pubblicati su riviste internazionali. Successivamente, riflettei su questa impresa collettiva dietro la richiesta della Prof. Tania Zittoun (Losanna, Svizzera): mi resi conto allora della validità del metodo di collaborare nella ricerca anche a diversi livelli di competenza. Nelle famiglie, trovai nei discorsi familiari l'origine dell'argomentare in bambini prescolari quando si oppongono al discorso normativo dei loro genitori (Pontecorvo, Sterponi, 2002). Un tale ragionamento pratico è il precursore dell'argomentare in situazioni sociali. Con Arcidiacono, ho trovato

successivamente in una famiglia italiana un lungo argomentare del figlio di sette anni con il padre sull'esistenza di "fantasmi" (Pontecorvo, Arcidiacono, 2016). La famiglia aveva uno stile democratico per cui i figli non eseguono gli ordini dei genitori, ma hanno spazio per argomentare, cioè, giustificare il loro mancato assenso. La sequenza argomentativa si innesca quando il figlio rifiuta l'invito del padre ad andare a dormire da solo perché dice di aver paura dei "fantasmi"; la discussione riguarda le prove dell'esistenza dei "fantasmi" e dura venti minuti, dopo che il figlio ne ha apportate varie. L'ultima prova riguarda la presenza di una foto a cui il padre sembra di cedere. Infatti dice: "*La foto di un fantasma? Allora si possono vedere, perché le foto riprendono solo le cose che si vedono.*" A questo punto, il padre fa un gesto perentorio per indicare la fine della discussione. E il figlio conferma: "*Beh, allora si vedono.*" Di seguito, il figlio si dirige verso la sua stanza.

8.6. Conclusione

La produzione di argomentazioni ha origine nell'opposizione alle direttive genitoriali, ma può svilupparsi anche nel contesto interattivo proposto dalla scuola: serve a promuovere il ragionamento e la ricerca di nuove conoscenze anche nei contesti familiari quando sono presenti figli di età scolare.

Dopo aver fatto la ricerca sui piccoli gruppi autonomi che hanno registrato da soli le loro discussioni è emerso che l'argomentare può aver luogo tra bambini molto efficacemente anche senza l'intervento degli adulti.

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9. Schools and children' cultural socialization

Cristina Zucchermaglio

The Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento is an association of autonomous nursery schools. Established in 1950, it currently has 134 member schools, scattered throughout the entire provincial territory, which make up 50% of Trentino's preschool system. Since 12 years, the Federation has had a Research/training Agreement with the Department of Psychology of Social and Developmental Processes of Sapienza University of Rome, of which I am scientific responsible.

This institutional and organizational framework has been essential to both realize paths of situated research in such a rich and complex educational system (134 schools, 8000 children and 1000 teachers!) and contribute to develop that system in an innovative way. Activities that involved, in multiple lines of shared action and research, the researchers of the Department and the managers, coordinators and teachers of the Federation.

I will describe here how Vygotsky's thinking and ideas have been useful in dealing with this organizational and educational complexity. In particular their relevance in giving direction and inspiration to both the choices of educational design and those underlying teacher training activities in the Federation's schools.

9.1. Children, school and cultural socialization practices

In the essay "The problem of cultural development of the child", published in 1929, Vygotsky highlights the presence of two lines of child's development: a "natural" line of development, linked to the process of

organic growth of the child, and a "cultural" one of development of higher psychological functions. While not denying the importance of organic maturation in the child's development, Vygoyskij emphasizes the exclusively human specificity of a development culturally mediated by practices, tools, signs, language. The two lines of development (natural and cultural) - come together very early on, making it difficult to distinguish and analyze them separately: for example, does the child memorize better because he or she has matured or because he or she has learned to use signs and symbols, such as culturally available mnemonic techniques?

Vygotsky pointed out how to look at children's development it is necessary to consider their coming into contact not only with the cultural experiences around them, but also with "habits and forms of cultural behavior, the cultural methods of reasoning". (*Ibidem*, p. 415).

In this sense, organic and neuronal maturation acts as a necessary condition for cultural development, but its structure is determined by external factors. It is precisely this reference to the "external factors" of development that makes Vygotsky an indispensable landmark for those interested in children's education. His position on child's development assigns indeed a central and politically dense role to the quality and richness of the experiences of cultural socialization that take place in schools.

Vygotskij speaks of "cultural development" to emphasize that the growth of the child is not only a biological development, i.e., a process that is achieved simply with the "passage of time": instead, in this development solicitations and life experiences at which children can participate during that passage of time are crucial. Ochs (2002), in fact, speaks of socialization - instead of development - highlighting that what "counts" are precisely the practices and opportunities for social, discursive and material participation through which children progressively become competent members of the culture in which they live. It is the quality and richness of these socialization practices, especially the educational and familiar ones, that make the difference in children's cultural development paths. Similarly, also Bruner (1992; 1995), Cole (1995) and Gardner (1991) have shown how the socio-educational practices "around" children are far from neutral with respect to the direction of their cultural development.

Therefore, the intentional socialization of children with the "toolbox" of our culture and with its "cultural amplifiers" (i.e. all those

tools that allow our cognitive and psychological functioning to be strengthened culturally) becomes crucial. Consider for example, how taking notes "amplifies" our ability to memorize through the materiality of the written signs made interpretable by a culturally shared code.

In this theoretical framework, assumed as its own by the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento, the schools' role is precisely to offer directions and tools that promote the cultural development of children. Vygotsky argues that "it is good that learning that precedes development" that "awakens and activates a series of functions that are at a certain stage of maturation" (Vygotsky, 1990, p. 252). Therefore, schools shouldn't just wait for children to "mature" to acquiring certain knowledge. Instead, teachers should offer to children rich opportunities for participation in material and discursive experiences and practices for driving and enriching their cultural development and socialization. In this sense, schools have both the "honor and the burden" of introducing the social and cultural dimension into children's minds.

Schools, starting from nurseries and kindergartens, have therefore the "political" responsibility (Calamandrei, 1950) to allow all children participate in meaningful and dense paths of cultural socialization. An important and relevant political and social responsibility schools have to face with as professional organizations with an institutional and public mandate and with both explicit pedagogical projects and declared educational intentions.

9.2. Schools as social and discursive contexts

Children meet and share the school-day with many other children. The children's numerosity, far from being a problem, allows, on the contrary, to realize diversified and multiple occasions of social and discursive interaction between children and between adults and children. Such interactions are one of the most powerful engines for children's cultural socialization, due to the well-known and proven relationship between speech and learning (Pontecorvo, Ajello, Zucchermaglio, 1991; Pontecorvo, Sterponi, 2002; Resnick, Asterhan, Clarke, Schantz, 2018).

Thinking is a process that children learn to articulate thanks to the discourses to which they can participate. Thought is realized and constructed with words: children (and adults) think "in" and "with" speech. Speech is not a translation or materialization of underlying

thoughts. Thinking is determined discursively by the cultural mediation of words. Therefore, it is important for children to have opportunities to learn to "think with words" (Vygotsky, 1929).

According to Vygotsky (1974), every higher psychological function appears twice during development: first at the social and discursive level, as a category of inter-psychological functioning, and then at the individual one, as an intra-psychological category. In other words, everything that becomes part of our mental-internal repertoire is always preceded by an external and social phase. Therefore, learning and socialization in children (as well as in adults) is never an individual, internal and "solitary" phenomenon, but a process that moves from social to individual" (Rogoff, 1995).

One of the fundamental theoretical constructs to explain such a mechanism is the Zone of Proximal Development (with the related Scaffolding construct, Wood et al., 1976): the area of psychological functioning between what an individual can do without help and what he or she can do supported by another one who "knows more than he does". Vygotskij attributes to the Zone of Proximal Development the value of "tomorrow of development", so completely overturning the traditional way of planning educational activities. The focus will be on activities that allow and activate experiences of children's participation in learning activities that involve others (teachers first of all) but also peers, always differently competent (although their ages could be the "same").

Different and flexible forms of participation in such activities of discursive interaction with others (children and adults) become therefore a formidable educational tool for the schools, as those of the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento, that recognize themselves in a socio-constructivist theoretical framework. In this framework, schools are basically physical, material and symbolic space in which a shared reflection and symbolization of daily events are at stake allowing children to experience and participate as "thinking beings in thinking spaces" (Perret-Clermont, 2004).

Let us now analyze a small group educational interaction led by a teacher. This excerpt is a good example of how "thinking with words" can be encouraged and supported in the schools of Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento (see Excerpt 1).

The teacher is around a table with four children and together they are discussing about "why are the leaves falling?". The problem had

been raised by a child the day before in the school garden. The teacher had not immediately responded to the child but instead she has planned a dedicated and ad hoc time to (ri)propose the problem as a discussion with a small group of children. An important premise. The intention of the teacher is not to "teach" the children because the leaves are falling. Otherwise, there was no need for a group discussion with children. She could have simply answered the curious child when they were in the garden. The teacher builds this educational interaction for giving space and voice to the children's hypotheses and theories about the natural phenomenon at stake. Its teaching role is here not of saying which theories is right or wrong but on the contrary that of creating an interactive scaffolding that allows children to "think (together) with words".

Excerpt 1 - Why are the leaves falling?

1. Ins.: l'altro giorno, era venuta fuori una domanda. come
mai le foglie, (0.5) cadono? adesso cadono [le f-
2. Nunz.: [lo so io!
3. Ins.: non devi alzar la mano, devi,
parlare tra di voi [e provare a capire
4. Nunz.: [lo so io!
5. Ins.: [perché
6. Nunz.: [perché si se-
7. Ins.: devi dirlo a loro!
8. Nunz.: perché si seccano, le foglie, e poi cadono.
9. Luca: eh, no, no non è vero perché- perché il vento va così
forte,
10. Sim.: perché c'è il vento, che- che poi, che- perché c'è il
vento, e allora, e allora, le foglie son leggere, e ca-
dono.
11. (1.0)
12. Ins.: tu cosa ne di- tu cosa dicevi? cosa ne pensi di questa
idea?
13. Luca: ma perché
14. Sim.: perché-
15. Luca: ha ragione il Simone, Nunzio!
16. Sim.: perché- perché [il vento va così forte
17. Luca [perché il vento [quando va, va forte

18. Sim.: [perché- perché- Nunzio! perché, il vento, il vento fa aria e le foglie sono leggere e allora cadono.
19. Ins.: e tu cosa ne pensi Nunzio? (0.5) cosa avevi detto prima? prova a dirlo di nuovo!
20. Nunz.: (in-) queste foglie sono secche e cadono.
21. Ins.: lui dice che è perché [sono secche.
22. Luca: [e- e >adesso posso dire una cosa io? < il vento quando-, >ha ragione il Simone perché<, il vento va così forte e le foglie sono così leggere, che si staccano dagli alberi, oppure, le- pa[ssa l'inverno,
23. Nunz.: [siamo tutti d'accordo con me?
24. Luca: OPPURE, cadono, e restano in terra.
25. Ins.: e allora, io mi chiedo, ma come mai? il vento c'è anche d'estate, d'estate c'è a volte il vento forte, però le foglie non cadono d'estate.
26. Sim.: perché-
27. INs.: perché cadono solo adesso d'autunno?
27. Sim.: perché- perché deve anche, un pochino esserci vento, perché se no, ogni giorno c'è sole!
29. Luca: eh-
30. Ins.: eh ma?
31. Sim.: non bisogna ogni giorno c'è sole, eh!
32. Ins.: [eh, ma il vento c'è durante l'estate!
33. Luca: [sono d'accordo, posso dire una cosa? eh- ma perché durante, l'estate, le foglie, quando c'è vento, sono forti, e allora non cadono.
35. Ins.: ah! secondo te [è così?
36. Sim.: [perché è il mese che dipende!
37. Ins.: ah, dipende dal mese, che cadono?
38. Luca: questo mese cadono, e gli altri mesi stanno su!
39. Sim.: maestra è dal mese!
40. Ins.: ah, è dal mese!
41. Nunz.: no!
42. Ins.: eh!
43. Nunz.: deve fare le foglie nuove fa, ha fatto oggi.
44. Ins.: ah, perché deve fare le foglie nuove?
ah, ho cap[ito!
45. Sim.: [siamo tutti d'accordo con Nunzio?
46. Nunz.: va bene!

Although the interaction between children would also deserve a very thorough analysis for the high level of their argumentative

thinking, we focus here on the teacher's discursive role in allowing and supporting this collective thinking. What does the teacher do? And more importantly, what doesn't it do?

First of all, the teacher listens to the children without ever (ever!) giving any evaluation, let alone offering them solutions to the problem they are discussing. Then he tolerates the disagreement between children leaving them to argue it and giving reasons. Moreover, she hardly speaks, and this is already a secure predictor of the richness of thinking and discourse among children. At the same time, she participates with very precise and refined interventions.

For example:

- 1) She repeated several times (int. 19-21) to children the most advanced explanation proposed by Nunzio (int. 8, 20), who had not considered it;
- 2) She problematizes the children's positions (int. 25, 27) to induce them to produce new arguments and to "change" their "ideas" (which in fact change (see int.45), since they do not find solid arguments to respond to its problematization).

An interaction with this level of argumentation and thinking among 4-year-old children is not a "natural" one. Both the design of the learning experience (small group, dedicated time, and so on) and the conversational role played by the teacher were crucial for its interactional deployment and development.

In fact, only specific organizational and discursive conditions make interactions between children's occasions for argumentative thought and learning (and not only occasions for having relationships and conversation). The centrality of both the educative design and teachers' discursive management of such interactions underlines and calls the importance of teacher training practices through which the innovation and change of the schools of the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento has grown in the last 10 years and which we will now describe in detail.

9.3. Teacher training and practice change

The role of teachers is therefore crucial for the construction of rich and meaningful contexts that support the cultural socialization of children. Teachers are working "behind the scenes" for developing learning occasions for children. An educational design work which has to be

realized and defined through a shared intentionality among teachers and aimed at creating the material, organizational and discursive conditions of children's daily life at school.

As we have seen, productive interactions between children and teachers (as well as between children) are neither natural nor spontaneous. On the contrary, they require a precise teachers' intentionality as well as specific disciplinary, organizational and discursive competences (see Ajello, Zucchermaglio, 1985; Zucchermaglio, 2019). These competences are especially at stake for the educational design and the organization of spaces, times, routines, opportunities and experiences, rich and significant learning occasions among and for children, in which the constructive, distributed and social character of learning has room to feed itself.

Like any other "educational" enterprise, also a teacher training program must be guided by references, assumptions and theoretical and methodological frameworks. At this regard, we will describe some fundamental aspects of the teacher training activities of the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento. We will recognize how these activities moves within a framework of socio-constructivist inspiration and their debt to Vygotskian thought (cf. Mecacci, 2017).

First of all, talking about training of teachers means talking about change and innovation. Introducing innovation and change in the practices of organizations and professional communities is always a complex and delicate phenomenon (Stoppini, Scaratti, Zucchermaglio, 2009).

Referring to the framework of cultural psychology and relying on the Vygotskian concept of re-mediation (Engestrom, 2006), we consider change as an area of proximal development of collective activity, as a moving border, as a negotiating area to be built collectively, with the contribution of all the social actors involved in it.

In this framework the teacher training activities realized at the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools of Trento are very different from a traditional one. These latter are mainly made of indications, contents or decontextualized methods that are taken from "outside" and brought "inside" the schools. The teacher training practices realized in Trento are very different from the delivery of a "package" of educational activities and contents to be transmitted: they support, on the contrary, the active participation and involvement "as authors" of teachers in the design of educational activities to be carried out with

children. The teacher training in Trento can therefore be described also as a collective and situated construction of new professional and educational practices and of new forms of organizational "expansion".

In this perspective, which we have elsewhere defined as "dialogic" (Zucchermaglio, Alby, 2006), organizational change should be considered a complex socio-organizational phenomenon (and not a problem of change of single individuals). Therefore, we consider teachers' training as an enterprise towards innovation in their professional and educational practices. Innovation is not a decontextualized and transferable "object", but a social phenomenon developing slowly. Innovation is always a provisional outcome of social and professional practices that teachers develop through (even difficult and contested) negotiations and discussions. Negotiations that are nourished by dialogues, by "war stories" (Orr, 1996), in short, by distributed activities of collective negotiation in which even the conflict between ideas, and practices has room to be a productive element.

Therefore, innovation has to be made and built "with" the teachers and not "on" them (Mantovani, 2008). The changes in teachers' educational practice are therefore always partial, uncertain and open (as "moving boundaries") to further and innovative professional and organizational developments.

In Trento teacher training is therefore a complex institutional enterprise, that requires and has required: 1) a long and stable timehorizon; 2) the deployment of many organizational actors (more than 20 trainers, 21 pedagogical coordinators, 2 scientific consultants, a technical-scientific committee and a research and training sector, within the Federation, mainly dedicated to this. In turn also these organizational actors have built and innovated over time, with difficult and length negotiations, some methodological and theoretical guidelines that allow them to act as an effective and reflective training community.

Teacher Training therefore has as a main objective that of creating spaces, times and occasions for participation in which the teacher individual skills can be visible and available to their professional community (and not just of their individual biographies). Occasions in which there is a continuous and productive expansion of the 'horizon of observation' (Hutchins, 1995) between teachers and that supports a circulation of their professional skills.

The impressive organizational investment and the long and stable horizon of action behind the teacher training activities has allowed the

development of shared repertoires of teachers' professional practices, through continuous and repeated interactions "around" concrete objects or educational projects.

These changes have been taken place (and are still taking place) in a long time (about 10 years): ten years characterized and qualified by a high and regular frequency of joint meetings among trainers, coordinators and teachers (32 hours per year) and among teachers (about 3 hours per week).

At this end, very relevant were (and still are) the operational characteristics of these joint meetings among teachers. They were designed as occasions in which it has been possible to practice (and also maintain and develop over time) social modes of educational design and repertoires of shared professional practices. A not ephemeral organizational and educational change requires not only long and dedicated times but also continuous opportunities for teachers' common and reflective work.

9.4. The "Signature pedagogy" of the teacher training program

We will now describe in details how the teachers' training is articulated at the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools. We will here explain some further elements that qualify its "signature pedagogy", i.e. the peculiar ways in which we have decided to deal with the task of transforming the teachers' knowledge into knowledge in use (cf. Shulman, 2005).

Our reflection and description of teacher training practices will be situated within the wider debate on vocational training through practice, which emphasizes that "expertise developed through action in context and practice is the hallmark of only some innovative and practice-based curriculum" (see Little, 2012, p. 145).

Within this framework, particularly important for the planning and implementation of the Trento training activities were the indications for development of a practice-centered teacher training (Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, 2009). Among these: 1) the training activities has to be organized around a defined set of "core practices" and the related teaching routines that make them up (see also Lampert, 2001); 2) local forms of supervision and coaching has to be organized. These latter enable teachers to learn and progress "in" and "from" practice; 3)

the training activities involve teacher not as single individual but as members of professional practice communities.

Let us now describe the four methodological axes around which the practical approach to teacher training of the Provincial Federation of Nursery Schools is structured.

9.4.1. Teacher's core competencies. A first aspect has to do with a reflection on what the "job" of kindergarten teachers is. What are the "key competences" that need to be built and innovated in and through practice?

In the Federation teachers' training approach, teachers acquire and develop "professional" knowledge, design skills and "relational" knowledge, such as required by the 2012 National Indications. Particularly central in defining the "signature pedagogy" of teacher training is the development of collegial educational design practices, as we will analyze further.

We can describe these practices using the metaphor of teachers as "choreographers" of educational interactions allowing children to develop new "cultural" ways of thinking and reasoning. Teachers learn to give an overall and pedagogically meaningful sense to the interweaving of spaces, times, materials, routines and activities that make up the daily educational context offered to children attending school. This means training teachers to be: "organizers of that social environment which is the only educational factor" (cf. Vygotsky in Mecacci, 2017, p. 114) for offering a direction and opportunities for the children's cultural development. In this Vygotsky quotation the enhancement of the social, material and temporal context of the school as a powerful and ineliminable factor to promote learning is highlighted.

A learning context sustaining multiple learning opportunities and occasions to participate (and reflecting), together with teachers and other children, in culturally rich experiences of thought and discourse. Vygotsky defines this role of teachers even more precisely when he says: "Organize the child's relationship with the elements of the environment that act on him". (p. 114 in Mecacci, 2017).

Not every environment is equally rich and "formative". For children it is not enough to be in "any" educational context to have significant opportunities for cultural development. It is only the teachers' pedagogical and organizational intentionality that makes it so and can give direction and impetus to children's cultural development.

In this framework also the teachers' professional and relational knowledge continue to be important. These latter are essential resources for the realization of culturally rich and diversified educational design practices. For this reason, the Trento teachers are involved in specific training courses on such (alsodisciplinary): in these latter, they are involved in educational activities at an "adult level" (Gus, 1979; Pontecorvo, 1979) for the co-designing of experiences and activities to be subsequently experimented in schools with children.

9.4.2. Education Design for learning processes. A second aspect of the Trento practice-based approach to teacher training is an educational design practice guided by the learning processes to be activated in children (which has progressively and over time replaced a design on contents or themes).

This innovative choice has made it possible to design in a powerful way all the activities and routines that take place daily in the environment and in the context of the school.

The learning process on which the school has decided to invest is the "rudder" for the teachers' educational planning of children' daily activities. Besides that, the learning process allows a situated connection and continuous exchange with the training practices that involve the teachers, also without a direct supervision of trainers. The choice to put the learning processes at the centre of teachers' educational planning has brought to prominence in their daily work precisely that "socialization of children to cultural tools (internal and external)". (Vygotsky, cit. in Mecacci, 2017).

In this light, the first objective of their educational work became to involve children in material, discursive and social activities in which to practice those cognitive processes that will then become part of their internal cognitive repertoire. The learning process is therefore one of the cultural tools of which the child must appropriate internally (Vygotskij, 1929 speaks of "ingrowing"), but that first needs to be used as an external cultural means, in the interaction with the material and social world such as, for example, an educational context built around this primary intentionality (Vygotskij, 1929). The school, as we have seen, has as its main educational task just to accompany children towards an "internal" socialization of the cognitive and material resources that culture has produced during its historical development.

9.4.3. Research tools and reflective use of video recordings. The third aspect of the Trento practice-based approach to teacher training concerns the teachers' socialization with the scientific research's methods and tools. We consider the experimentation, analysis and evaluation of educational actions as a distinctive feature of teachers' professional competence: their ability to be able to choose from a repertoire of educational actions, to evaluate them and therefore to modify and let them evolve.

Putting these observational/reflective practices at the centre of their training programme means offering teachers a socialization to those written and material practices through which researchers give public account of the results of their actions to the scientific, organizational and institutional communities to which they belong. To account for their educational actions, teacher must be equipped with the instruments for doing it. A qualifying aspect of the Federation's practice-based training system (as well as in line with the best international research on the topic of teacher training, see Little, 2012), is thus their socialization to tools and methodologies (such as, among others, ethnographic observation, video recording of educational practices, discursive and multimodal analysis of interactions) to "give an account" of the practices and interactions that develop at school.

In particular, the widespread use of video-recordings of educational experiences with children has been a real "methodological pick-lock" that has allowed to connect in a reflective way the teachers' educational design thinking with the educational actions carried out at school (Shulman, 2005). There are a lot of training opportunities in which groups of teachers analyze and discuss video-recordings of "rich, significant and/or problematic cases" of educational interactions. In these occasions teachers are carrying out together, mainly with the supervision of trainers, activities of systematic observation, reflection and self-analysis and evaluation and re-design of those experiences and educational activities.

9.4.4. Teachers' communities. These latter activities must be carried out together by groups of teachers in order to be effective and truly formative. The essential role of the teacher communities is just the last, but not the less important, qualifying point of the practice-based approach to teacher training that has been implemented in the schools of the Trento Federation. In fact, the design, reflection and analysis of

educational interactions must be public and shared activities, as well as backed by video materials and observations.

Working together with other teachers of the same school (and also, sometimes, with teachers from other schools) supports a richer analytical and reflective work on educational interactions, precisely because it is more discussed and negotiated: in such social contexts decisions must be taken, choices and priorities assigned, points of view should be expressed and arguments should be provided. In sum teachers' group supports an educational design work and a reflective work in the "area of proximal development" of teachers participating in that group. On the one hand, therefore, the materiality of the video-recorded educational activities supports the teachers' "cognition in interaction" (Streeck, Goodwin, LeBaron, 2011). On the other hand, the enhancement of their formative work as a professional group is based on and takes up the indications that come to us from the models of situated learning (such as LPP, cf. Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1988) and from studies on the construction of expert skills in professional communities (Orr, 1996).

The practices of training work carried out "by" and "with" the teacher communities of Trento schools reaffirm as teaching is not, and cannot be, a private matter. Accepting to de-privatize one's own educational practices, accepting that one's work becomes "public" requires teachers' time and effort (and even some initial courage), but has the advantage of making them become actors and authors of their professional development and of the educational and organizational innovation of the schools in which they work.

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10. A pedagogical action on the zone of proximal (next) development

Guido Benvenuto

In this new millennium, teaching models have increasingly focused on enhancing teaching for competence. What does it mean? It means that teaching cannot be limited to the disciplinary perspective, but it must make students increasingly capable of solving new and unprecedented problematic situations. Learning must be transversal and use cooperative and laboratory approaches to transform the class into a small learning community. These general indications suffice to underline how the new directives (not so new in the history of pedagogy and educational psychology) move the teaching plan towards the perspective of the co-construction of learning, where experiential and group activities are enhanced, and assessment and evaluation models are to be modified.

The school of the third millennium takes up aspects of Vygotsky's thought that belong to a specific historical-cultural approach: a school intended as a cooperative and inclusive learning environment, enhancing the differences and the adaptation of individuals to the social environment of the others.

This contribution

¹ shows how these lines of thought are reflected in the current practices and valuable to understand how to direct didactic actions. In particular, this contribution is meant to discuss how the formative evaluation of school learning can help prepare cooperative and inclusive learning environments in its various meanings and methodologies.

¹ This text, initially written in Italian, was translated by the author, Guido Benvenuto, in collaboration with Cinzia Angelini, professor of Experimental Pedagogy at the University of Roma3

10.1. Professional skills for a pedagogical action on the zone of proximal (next) development

Vygotsky underlines the substantial difference between individual and cooperative learning. An inclusive school offering a cooperative environment must necessarily start from this difference. Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development is well known; however, it is necessary to briefly recall it here to clarify how the collaborative dimension in learning-enhancing environments support and help acquire new learning.

First, following Mecacci (2017, pp. 119-120), the term "proximal" needs linguistic clarification. The English "*zone of proximal development*" (ZPD), generally translated as "*zona di sviluppo prossimale*", is being changed in several languages, with "proximal" replaced by "next", to highlight the temporal rather than the space dimension. The expression "*zone of next development*" emphasizes what can be learned later (temporal distance) if appropriate conditions for learning are provided. The zone of next development is the distance between the level of development that the learner can reach independently and the level that can be reached with the support or collaboration of others (students or teachers), and therefore of potential development². This Vygotskyian theory is probably the most widespread in the pedagogical field because it offers a dynamic perspective on learning and underlines the decisive effect of teaching. Starting from the 80s, Vygotsky's thought began to spread rapidly in Italy due to the translations edited by the two American authors Cole and Scribner.

This translation of his works gave a great impulse to disseminate the "zone of proximal development" concept in school environments. The word "proximal" is defined as follows: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotskij, 1978, p. 86). This "zone" is a developmental dimension on which teaching and didactic support can intervene.

² For this reason, in the current paper we will use "zone of next development" instead of "zone of proximal development". The English term proximal can in fact be translated into Italian as "prossimale" (which in the medical lexicon indicates "closer to the centre of the body" or "closer to the point of origin") or as "prossimo" (indicating a condition or situation that is about to occur, or in succession – hence, with a temporal meaning).

Therefore, the school can and must develop the training action necessary to promote learning development. The guidance of an adult, parent or teacher, or peers, such as students or friends, can act as mediation for developing higher psychic functions of potential learning. Collaborative action by competent adults and educational teaching facilitates learning, provided, of course, the teaching program is tailored to the learner's needs. "With assistance, every child can do more than he can by himself—though only within limits set by the state of his development" (Vygotskij, 1934/1986, p. 187).

Thus, teachers can take advantage from teaching practices in order to model learning paths in an individualized way, to guarantee everyone the achievement of goals independently and to expand their potential, offering support, stimulating experiences and ad-hoc incentives. The more cognitive development is achieved by the student in the various years of schooling, the greater the internalization of learning and the possibility of further improving independently and under the competent assistance of teachers or other adults.

Therefore, on the one hand, increasing autonomy and cognitive development depend on the teaching and learning experiences offered in school and extra-school training. On the other hand, they depend on how teachers exert their role of assistance and mediation. Hence, teaching skills are crucial in expanding and regulating the "zone of next development".

Places and spaces for teaching and learning must be transformed to detect students' socio-cultural variability and individual differences. Including basically means "open" the school and reorganize the learning environment. And so the classrooms become modular spaces, schools are transformed into learning buildings (see the Dada model - *Didattica per Ambienti di Apprendimento*: Benvenuto, Fattorini, 2020), technologies expand the times and spaces for learning (from the flipped classroom to distance or integrated asynchronous learning), several innovative settings offer the opportunity to pursue multiple aims and focus on new teaching-for-competence scenarios (school-

work alternation, outdoor education³, outreach education⁴, service-learning⁵).

Whatever the different disciplinary, methodological and relational skills, the central role of teachers lies precisely in the Montessori idea of building environments that promote learning. The organization of spaces, materials, and times becomes the pedagogical direction to be pursued through collaborative work benefiting from personal experiences and the school's environment. As stated by Vygotskij (1926/2006, p. 95):

³ Outdoor education usually refers to organized learning in an outdoor setting and includes a wide range of organised activities which take place in predominantly outdoor environments and are promoted by schools, associations, or public local bodies. Outdoor education programmes usually involve residential or journey-based experiences in which students participate in a variety of challenges. It is an educational strategy based on active and experiential learning. It can integrate traditional approaches with experiences that cannot be lived indoor.

⁴ Community-based pedagogy works on the principle that effective student learning occurs when teaching is not isolated from the student's life (London, 1994). Community outreach activities may have a beneficial effect for both students and the community. These activities cause students to look beyond themselves to become more informed of community issues and may involve the students in working through a possible solution to a community problem. The community may profit by having students be more involved as active citizens and as possible contributors to solutions for community issues. These lesson examples demonstrate the effectiveness of student involvement in community design issues. The teachers were encouraged to create art lessons that teach design, rely on teamwork, and create interdisciplinary avenues of accomplishing ways to improve their environments or particular conditions. (Vande Zande, 2007, p.3).

⁵ Service Learning is an interpretation of the relationship between inside and outside a school; it consists of an approach that allows for the realization of learning pathways in real-world contexts, with the aim of developing disciplinary, transverse, and professional competence to stimulate the active participation of students (Fiorin, 2016). It is a pedagogical proposal extended on a worldwide scale albeit with diverse meanings and different ways of planning and applying it. In the literature there are many definitions of Service Learning: María Nieves Tapia (2006) defines it as «a set of projects or programmes of supportive service (intended to meet a real and heartfelt need in a territory, working with and not only for the community, in a delimited and effective way), with the students participating as protagonists from the initial planning stage up to the final assessment and intentionally connected with the learning contents (including the curriculum, reflections, and skills development for citizenship and work)». «Service Learning allows children, adolescents and young people to develop their knowledge and expertise thanks to carrying out a service to support the community» (Tapia, 2006) and allows the introduction of active educational methodologies as an alternative to lecture-based lessons. (cfr. <http://pheegaro.indire.it/uploads/attachments/2449.pdf>; Miur, 2020; Europe Engage, 2020).

"And if the teacher is powerless in direct interaction with the pupil, he is instead omnipotent due to the direct influence on him through the social environment. The latter is the real lever of the educational process, and the whole role of the educator is reduced to managing this lever. Just as the gardener would be crazy if he wanted to influence the growth of plants by pulling them directly out of the earth with his hands, in the same way, the pedagogue would be in contrast with the nature of education if he tried to act directly on the child. But the gardener affects the flower budding by raising the temperature, regulating the humidity, changing the arrangement of nearby plants, collecting and mixing soil and fertilizer, that is, once again indirectly, through appropriate changes in the environment. Thus also the pedagogue, by modifying the environment, educates the child"⁶.

Therefore, the design and management of learning environments are a central dimension in the professionalism of teachers, but – due to their complexity - they must be tackled in a collegial way and a participatory research dimension. The complexity of reality, characterizing emergency contexts and all the fields of intervention of "special" pedagogy with its problematic situations, requires greater awareness and educational intentionality. Teachers must be increasingly involved in a training and professional research perspective, aiming at acquiring and developing a metacognitive competence, which is indispensable for the construction of professional knowledge.

More investments are needed in a qualified initial and in-service training of teachers so that they can experiment, in the broadest sense of the term, forms and procedures for monitoring the didactic impact, effectiveness and transferability of teaching and organizational innovations. At the same time, educational research suggests how to adopt the necessary methodological innovations.

Considering teaching design and learning environments, the *Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi scenari* (2018) say that "the integration of disciplines to explain the complexity of reality, the construction of knowledge and skills through the analysis of problems and the management of complex situations, cooperation and social learning, experimentation, investigation, contextualization in experience, laboratory work, are all essential factors for developing skills and significant learning, endowed with meaning and value for the citizenship".

⁶ Freely adapted from the Italian text.

Once again, the focus is on teaching for competence, teaching that has to promote problem-solving attitudes and skills in a perspective of individual development and growth, autonomy and awareness, and enhancing the social implication and ethical perspective for future citizens and citizenship. I believe this point was evident in Vygotsky (1934, ed. ingl. 1986, p. 188-189) when he stated that teaching actions were the necessary tool to achieve these learning objectives and “to lead the child to new levels of development”; in Vygotsky’s words:

“In learning to speak, as in learning school subjects, imitation is indispensable. What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions. It remains necessary to determine the lowest threshold at which instruction in, say, arithmetic may begin since a certain minimal ripeness of functions is required. But we must consider the upper threshold as well; instruction must be oriented toward the future, not the past”.

These considerations closely recall some reflections that Visalberghi developed in one of his latest works. He clearly pointed out how learning is not only the effect of deliberate teaching, but an activity of independent discovery, socially stimulated, and more generally the result of playful explorations in which the human being is engaged almost from birth (Visalberghi, 1986, p. 14). Therefore, the social dimension of learning is considered an intrinsic dimension to the evolution of the species; it recalls the historical-cultural approach consistent with Vygotsky’s conception of the “zone of next development” and the sociogenesis of higher psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1931). According to Visalberghi, the priority of learning over teaching could turn out to be a pedagogical paradox (however only apparently so): always learning and necessarily precedes effective teaching (Visalberghi, 1988, p. 15). As he clarifies:

“Of course, the learning that precedes effective teaching is not aimed at the same knowledge object as that of subsequent teaching. This does not mean that one must learn the law of the pendulum by himself before it is taught, no matter how (by general statement followed by a demonstration, by the teacher or through experiments conducted by the students themselves). It means that to understand and assimilate the law of the pendulum, certain operational concepts must already

be clear, such as length, duration, weight, size, and that these concepts are mainly constructed through spontaneous activities rather than through specific teaching activities.

There is a sort of ideal precedence of learning over teaching, and principled precedence of spontaneity over didactic intentionality”⁷.

The socio-cultural background of the learner, his cognitive background, interests, attention and willingness to act must be considered explicitly in teaching activities; above all, those activities are to be conceived as forms of support, of external guidance, to facilitate the acquisition and development of higher functions. Therefore, the teacher must be able to support those actions through educational approaches that facilitate the transition and ripening of learning and monitor and adjust them to promote significant learning.

10.2. Formative assessment as a tool for a pedagogical action on the zone of proximal (next)development

Assessment, intended as teaching regulation functions, can and must be a formidable tool for a school that wants to set up cooperative and inclusive learning environments. Of course, to enhance school learning, it is necessary to agree on the meaning of formative evaluation and didactic mediation.

Vygotsky criticized aptitude tests and their validity, broadening the discourse from the assessment of school learning to specific skills. In the last pages of the book *Ape, Primitive Man and Child*, the authors (Vygotsky, Luria, 1930) questions the assessment of the child's giftedness (capacity) and cultural development.

There is no need to think that cultural giftedness is a single, constant and static concept. It may manifest itself in quite different ways, and giftedness in one field does not necessarily imply giftedness in another. A musician who has developed exceptional cultural activity in one sphere may be wholly lacking in the gifts that we expect to find in a scientist, while a person with great practical gifts possesses quite a different set of qualities. Instead of the abstract and fairly

⁷ Freely adapted from the Italian text.

meaningless term “general giftedness” the notion of a whole range of special “giftednesses” is now being put forward.

[...]

This concept naturally presupposes a dynamic phenomenon acquired through living contact with the social environment. (Vygotskij, Lurija, 1930; English translation 1992)

The meaning of dynamic assessment is based and operationally clarifies the concept of teaching in the frame of the “zone of next development”. That is, to flexibly conceive activities and interventions, to develop individual potential, to recover, to empower, or - as it will be studied by Feuerstein (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffmann, 1979; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffmann, Miller, 1980) and Lidz (1987) - to modify the initial learning disabilities. Therefore, dynamic assessment focuses on the process rather than on the product:

Dynamic assessment is typically contrasted with static assessment. This reflects the fact that dynamic assessment focuses on learning processes, in contrast to the traditional assessment focus on already learned products. When products is the outcome there is no information regarding the reason for failure or the learner's ability to achieve. There are also no guidelines or implications for intervention to connect the assessment with intervention and to make the assessment relevant for an educational setting (Lidz, 1991, pp.3-4).

Feuerstein (1979, 1980) will develop dynamic assessment in his LPAD method (Learning Potential Assessment Device) and change the traditional assessment approach into four main areas: a) the tools used; b) the test administration setting; c) the process orientation; d) the interpretation of the results.

If attention shifts from learning products to learning processes, then teaching has to shift as well: from a traditional, static and notional approach to forms of situated, in-context learning to teaching for competence. From assessment of learning to assessment for learning. This step implies mediated learning, in which the teacher supports and participates with the students in the construction of knowledge. Vygotsky's concept of “guide”, of support, was taken up and widely disseminated by Bruner (Wood, Bruner, Ross, 1976), who identified in the adult, in the teacher the mediator (scaffolding) who “helps” the student operate slightly above the limits of his developmental area (zone

of next development). The challenge of school learning, then, increasingly highlights the ability to improve performances where all the dimensions involved in the manifestation of competence are in action: not the mere reproduction of knowledge, but its original and functional re-elaboration for a given situation.

Learning becomes co-construction of meanings, thanks to the teacher who knows how to adapt the most appropriate activities and strategies to support and fill in the gap between the actual and the potential situation. This expert teacher will not provide solutions or sanction mistakes, but will propose meaningful (or reality) tasks, and lead students as they face problems, manage situations, make products. From individual and antagonistic learning to social and cooperative learning. As teaching moves towards cooperative and laboratory activities, assessment has to move towards socially shared forms of group assessment. Resnick (1987) underlined the significant discontinuities between school learning and the nature of mental activity outside school: a) school focuses on individual performance, while mental work outside is often socially shared; b) school is aimed at encouraging unsupported thinking, while mental work outside the school usually includes cognitive tools; c) the school cultivates symbolic thought, whereas most mental activities outside school are engaged intimately with objects and situations; d) in school, general skills and knowledge are taught, while outside school the cognitive activity is shaped by and dependent upon the kinds of tools available.

If teaching models and environments change, then assessment and evaluation must change accordingly.

“The dominant form of school learning and performance is individual. Although group activities of various kinds occur in school, students ultimately are judged on what they can do by themselves. Furthermore, a major part of the core activity of schooling is designed as individual work – homework, in-class exercises, and the like. For the most part, a student succeeds or fails at a task independently of what other students do (except for the effects of grading on a curve!). in contrast, much activity outside school is socially shared” (Resnick, 1987).

At the same time, teaching can pass from hand to hand, from the teacher to the students, who become more and more competent, and gradually become independent and expert. This Vygotsky-inspired strategy has been widely disseminated in terms of reciprocal

teaching/learning. Starting from the 80s, many authors (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Palincsar, 1986) have developed studies and experiments. Learning becomes cooperative, and the school begins to transform itself into a cooperative learning and research environment. In the 90s, especially in North America, educational projects of learning communities (Community of Learners, CoL) were developed, such as the one directed by Brown and Campione (1994, 1996) at the University of Berkeley, to propose and experiment a fundamental theoretical and methodological reorganisation of school teaching (Brown, 1992).

Vygotsky's thought is, therefore, central to these insights, to develop a socio-cultural constructivist method concerning the cognitivist approach on metacognition and Dewey's idea of learning by discovery.

Therefore, cooperative learning, focusing on laboratory teaching and teaching for competence, requires an instrumental reshaping of assessment and evaluation. New forms of school assessment are needed to move towards a paradigm shift.

Scriven (1967) introduced the distinction between formative and summative assessment. Since then, many studies have tried to clarify how assessment can become crucial when teaching aims at supporting and enhancing the learning potential, just as in the zone of next development concept. From assessment to reviewing the curriculum, assessment followed by feedback, and assessment as (self)regulation of learning.

Formative assessment becomes a tool for actively involving students in the evaluation process to improve their motivation and self-esteem. Starting from the 90s, an increasing number of studies have presented formative assessment as an assessment for learning, a valuable and functional strategy to address students' difficulties. Assessment for learning means providing feedback and improving and adjusting the teaching/learning activities in which they are engaged (Black, Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b, 2003; Weeden, Winter, Broadfoot 2002; Hargreaves, 2005). Recently, Black and Wiliam (2009), following Wiliam, Thompson (2008), provided a theorization of formative assessment as a supportive dimension.

Today, assessment for learning is the meaning that best emphasizes both the formative dimension, useful for the teacher to monitor, modify and adjust teaching and the need for authentic learning.

In the first, more traditional sense, it acts through specific feedback that the teacher uses to follow and improve students' learning. It is a process evaluation that helps the teacher recognize the learning styles of each student and provide the necessary support to reach the expected goals.

The information that the teacher obtains from this evaluation is used to "shape" and personalize teaching as much as possible and provide the student with the most useful feedback to regulate learning.

Assessment becomes authentic as it moves away from the punctual and static detection of knowledge and skills at a precise moment, and takes place in a processual, laboratory, cooperative dimension, in a Vygotskyian perspective. Therefore, authentic assessment must propose virtual reality tasks representing the personal or professional sphere, rather than decontextualized school exercises; tasks that pose complex problems, to be solved in a pretty long time, days or weeks, and provide the opportunity to collaborate. A single student cannot complete these group activities, and the collaboration itself is part of the problem-solving task. As explained in the *Linee guida per la certificazione delle competenze* (MIUR, 2019), the tools for assessing competences make use of reality tasks (authentic tasks, expert tasks, etc.), which result in a complete, self-sufficient final product, but also in systematic observations and cognitive autobiographies.

Reality tasks are identified in the request to the student to solve a problematic, complex and new situation, as close as possible to a real one, using knowledge and skills already acquired and transferring cognitive procedures and behaviours into contexts that are slightly different from those made familiar by school activities. While not excluding tests focusing on a single discipline, the wished-for tasks ask the student to personally integrate different learning and knowledge. Solving a situation-problem (reality task) is the student's final product that the teacher will assess (MIUR, 2019, p. 8)⁸.

The various meanings of "formative" assessment briefly discussed so far all refer to the central function of assisting and supporting learning. Since learning must be seen in a perspective of development and potential, teaching must be active, collaborative and inclusive. Today more than ever, teaching for competence seems to embody the new

⁸ Freely adapted from the Italian text.

paradigm of professionalizing school teaching. At the same time, disciplinary and cross-disciplinary learning cannot focus on "immediate" tasks but on tasks that explore future and cooperation skills, useful for personal and professional life. To achieve this aim, to constantly improve teaching and assessment practices with a view to individual growth and development, it is necessary to set up assessment formats that develop along the learning process. Reality tasks do not suffice; systematic observation and tools are needed to monitor ongoing learning. Always in the *Linee Guida* (MIUR, 2019, p. 8), we read that:

different tools can be used for systematic observations - structured, semi-structured or unstructured and participatory grids or protocols, questionnaires and interviews - but they must refer to specific aspects characterizing the performance (competence indicators) such as:

- autonomy: the student can find the necessary tools or materials on his own and use them effectively;
- relationship: the student interacts with peers, knows how to express and instil trust, knows how to create a proactive atmosphere;
- participation: the student collaborates, makes requests for help, offers his contribution;
- responsibility: the student respects the assigned themes and the established phases of the work, completes the assignment received;
- flexibility: the student reacts to unforeseen situations or needs with diverging proposals, with functional solutions, with the original use of materials, etc.;
- awareness: the student is aware of the effects of his choices and actions.

Teaching for competence requires specific professional skills for teachers. It is certainly an objective yet to be achieved for many of them and for this reason of central interest in initial and in-service training programs. An objective envisaged by education policies, and widely present in the psycho-pedagogical conceptions and theories of Vygotsky and his successors. Assessment becomes more and more a strategy for process regulation, support, personalisation and school inclusion.

The concept of zone of next development has strongly influenced the paradigm shift from transmission and summative teaching to participatory and formative teaching. Collaborative learning encourages the social dimension of learning, interaction and collaboration:

reciprocal teaching, peer learning, group work, the use of technologies allows students to work together and build new knowledge; while the teacher is a mediator, a counselling tutor, a facilitator, a planner and manager of learning environments, aiming at the cross-competence of "learning to learn", to be achieved by the teaching staff collectively. When adopting laboratory methods, the teacher becomes a resource and a member of a community, and as an "expert", provides support and advice for knowledge co-construction.

In this way, assessment of the potential, of developmental capacities rather than of the immediate, to foster gradual acquisition, becomes, as some authors point out, "sustainable", that is to say interested in future implications (Boud, 2000; Boud, Soler, 2015).

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56. Historical-Cultural Theory
Studies and research
Guido Benvenuto and Maria Serena Veggetti



The Proceedings of the International Conference on "Historical-Cultural Theory: studies and research" are published in this volume. The event, supported by a grant from the Sapienza, University of Rome, took place at the Rectorat, Aula Organi Collegiali, on February the 25th, 2020, on organization by G. Benvenuto and M.S. Veggetti.

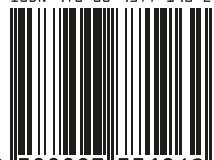
The invited speakers are among the most representative scholars and interpreters of Vygotskian thought at the national and international level. They are representative of different prestigious universities: Moscow State University for Psychology and Education; University of Sevilla, Spain; La Habana, Cuba; University of Florence, Italy; Sapienza, University of Rome; University of Arcavacata di Rende (CS), followers of the Historical-cultural trend in Psychology and/or the Activity Theory Approach - by L.S.Vygotskij, A.R. Luria, A.N.Leont'ev, V.V.Davydov, V.V.Rubtzov. They are actually involved in research expanding a multicultural approach to psycho-pedagogical development and learning.

Main purpose: revisit the Historical-cultural and Activity Approaches to face the XXI century's new educational and instructional needs. Consequently, the issues present further developments of the psycho-pedagogical approaches in different countries in the frame of internationalization and joint cooperation.

Maria Serena Veggetti, Full Professor of General Psychology, philosophical and psychological formation, the latter at Lomonosov State University / Moscow, introducing the first contributions in Italy aims at the Vygotskyan purpose: General Psychology as dialectics in Education by predisposing double-degree Russia/Rome Sapienza.

Guido Benvenuto, Full Professor of Research Methods in Education, shares extended knowledge of the historical-cultural approach in training professional educators, promoting two double-degrees between Sapienza University and Russian universities at Moscow and Stavropol (Caucasus).

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