Perspectives in Cultural-Historical Research 8

Marilyn Fleer
Fernando González Rey
Peter E. Jones *Editors*

Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology

Common Ground, Divergences and Future Pathways

Perspectives in Cultural-Historical Research

Volume 8

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There is growing interest in the work of LS Vygotsky internationally, but also in finding new ways and perspectives for advancing cultural-historical theory for solving contemporary problems. Although Vygotsky has become one of the most influential scholars in education and psychology today, there is still a need for serious studies of his work because so much remains unexamined.
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Fernando González Rey (27 June 1949–26 March 2019)

It is with great pride and honour that we dedicate this book to our late colleague and friend, Fernando González Rey, who initiated and inspired this project and with whom we worked so pleasurably and productively to bring it to its completion. We deeply mourn his passing and on behalf of ourselves, the series editors and managers at Springer, wish to express our most heartfelt condolences to Fernando's family and close friends. A searing intellect of passion and integrity and a man of joy, love, energy and commitment, Fernando indelibly touched the minds, hearts and souls of all those who met him and knew him. He leaves us a vibrant,

bountiful and productive body of theoretical and empirical work whose relevance and significance can only grow as we learn to face the societal challenges that he insistently identified and addressed.

This volume also represents a renewed affirmation of Fernando's unique status in the contemporary landscape of psychological science. Steeped in the Soviet psychological tradition with its links to Marx and the revolutionary origins of Soviet society, Fernando was at the same time heir and contributor to the radical and socially transformative traditions of Latin American social and political psychology. From that vantage point, he was able to recognize the contradiction between the emancipatory grounding and implications of the Russian Revolution and the intellectual calcification of Soviet science under Stalinist bureaucratic dictates, with all its consequences for the development of psychological theory. This book therefore represents a new stage in his creative struggle to reclaim psychological theory, to make it whole as a tool for confronting both humanity's plight and humanity's potential and for advancing in practice the common good.

It is our privilege to have been able to work with Fernando González Rey on such a bold project, and we hope that the finished work will be a valuable tribute to his cherished memory and his substantial scientific legacy.

Marilyn Fleer and Peter E. Jones

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We would like to record our profound appreciation and gratitude to Albertina Mitjáns Martínez for her generous support and assistance, in the most difficult family circumstances, during the completion of this book. Dr Martínez also kindly granted us permission to use an image of Fernando González Rey from her personal archive. We are also deeply indebted to Daniel Magalhães Goulart for all his help and encouragement during the final stages of the editorial process. Dr. Goulart's own personal tribute to Fernando González Rey, 'Subjectivity and Life: In Memory of Fernando González Rey' (*Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 2019), is an inspiring portrait of Fernando through the eyes of his student and close friend.

In addition, we would like to express our warm appreciation to all our contributing authors for so enthusiastically and productively engaging with our theme. We are also extremely grateful to Xianyu Meng, Ph.D. Student and Research Assistant at Monash University, and Lay Peng Ang, Senior Editorial Assistant at Springer Nature, for all their help and hard work in preparing the manuscript for editing and publication.

Contents

1 Introduction: Advancing Dialogues Between Critical Psychology and Cultural-Historical Theory 1
Marilyn Fleer, Fernando González Rey, and Peter E. Jones

Part I Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology: Entering a Dialogue

2 Critical Psychology: Subjects in Situated Social Practices 11
Ole Dreier

3 Critical Psychology as Cultural-Historical Psychology: Political Dimensions and Limitations of Psychological Knowledge 27
Ian Parker

4 Looking Toward a Productive Dialogue Between Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychologies 43
Fernando González Rey and Albertina Mitjáns Martínez

5 The Primacy of Critical Theory and the Relevance of the Psychological Humanities 63
Thomas Teo

Part II Pathways of Renovation: Critiques and Innovations Within Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology

6 Can the Concept of Activity Be Considered as a Theoretical Device for Critical Psychologies? 79
Fernando González Rey

7 Decolonising Childhood, Reconceptualising Distress: A Critical Psychological Approach to (Deconstructing) Child Well-Being 99
Erica Burman

8 Psychology and Psychologies 'from the Language End': Critical Reflections 113
Peter E. Jones

9 Problematizing Pedagogical Imports and Creating New Conditions for Children's Development: A Case from China 133
Marilyn Fleer, Liang Li, and Zhonglian Yan

10 Nationalism and/or Developing Understanding of Society? 155
Athanasios Marvakis

Part III The Emerging Themes

11 The Two Pathways of Vygotsky's Legacy: The Critical and Noncritical Coexisting Positions in Vygotsky's Thought 175
Fernando González Rey

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Advancing Dialogues Between Critical Psychology and Cultural-Historical Theory

Marilyn Fleer, Fernando González Rey, and Peter E. Jones

Abstract This chapter sets up the dialogue that the subsequent book chapters will advance through the empirical and theoretical discussions of individual chapter authors. We also elaborate further on the rationale of and the background to this book. The key idea for this chapter is to introduce the broad traditions in psychological theorising – 'cultural-historical' and 'critical'. The respective standpoints and priorities are presented in the context of an emerging fragmentation of psychology as a discipline. Importantly, this chapter features the common ground and shared goals so that a dialogue opens for new and innovative ideas. Links to the content of the book will be integrated through the shared and dramatic tensions that together move the field of psychology forward and beyond fragmentation.

Introduction

Through the pages of this book, it is our aim to initiate a long-overdue dialogue within the international community of scholars between representatives of two traditions in psychological theorising, broadly known as 'cultural-historical' and 'critical'. In inviting respected scholars from both traditions to present their respective standpoints and priorities, we hope to make visible common ground and shared goals with a view to advancing both fields of psychology and, more importantly, to encourage collaboration in forging innovative ways of addressing the contemporary fragmentation of psychology as a discipline.

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To advance in such a dialogue over deep-seated theoretical divisions, it is important for both sides to understand each other. To that end, the book features contributions from a range of researchers who have been responsible for important and innovative work in their home disciplines and who have also demonstrated willingness to look critically, and self-critically, at their theoretical trajectories. In their contributions, scholars articulate the key issues facing psychology as they see them and at the same time directly reflect on and debate fundamental differences of perspective across the 'cultural-historical'/'critical' divide. The ensuing discussion that emerges over the pages of this book helps bring the two trends into closer mutual understanding and thereby motivate new avenues for productive discussion and cooperation between representatives of these two important movements in contemporary psychology. At the same time, the tensions and contradictions that emerge organically across the different chapters will motivate new avenues for communication, debate and discussion across the theoretical divide.

In this first chapter, we set the scene for the debate to come by outlining briefly the aims and scope of the three parts into which our authors' contributions have been arranged.

Part I: Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology: Entering a Dialogue

In the first part of this book, we elaborate on cultural-historical psychology in relation to critical psychology. The two perspectives that are foregrounded in this book can be conceptualised as follows.

'Cultural-Historical' Psychology

The diverse currents of psychological thinking, which we will refer to, for convenience, under the broad umbrella of 'Soviet psychology', developed in a pioneering endeavour to understand the human mind and consciousness as historically constituted and embedded functions of social life and culture. This socio-historical orientation of Soviet psychology, despite the narrowness of its conception of 'social' and 'cultural', enabled significant breakthroughs in our view of mental life and development, the intellectual import and implications of which are yet to be fully grasped and appreciated.

This distinctively Soviet psychological tradition emerged in a highly contradictory, and unstable, political, historical and institutional context. Marxism, the transformative and liberatory ideology that had inspired the revolutionary overturn of October 1917 and to which a young generation of Soviet researchers appealed in constructing a new psychology, was progressively vulgarised and dogmatised in its

'Soviet Marxist' incarnation, becoming an unchallengeable credo by which all spiritual labour, including that in the natural sciences, was judged. The doctrinaire policing of 'Marxist' ideology and the ruthless conformism of Soviet institutional life and activity had severe consequences for both the principles and the application of the emerging psychological tradition: critical in relation to the ideological springs and assumptions of the mainstream world of Western psychology in some respects, Soviet psychology was completely uncritical towards the authoritarianism and social engineering of the Stalin era and silent on the growing problems of Soviet society. Instead, Soviet psychological currents tended to focus on child and developmental psychology, general psychology and education.

A central and highly important place in the Soviet psychological spectrum was occupied by the 'cultural-historical' school of Lev Vygotsky and his colleagues and students, an approach that was to be appropriated into Western psychology through the cognitive and linguistic lenses then dominant in American psychology in the 1960s (by the efforts of Jerome Bruner, Michael Cole and James Wertsch). However, the significance, interpretation and status of 'cultural-historical' psychology in relation to other contemporary schools of Soviet psychological theorising (including those of A N Leont'ev and S L Rubinstein) are currently issues of serious critical attention and disagreement.

'Critical' Psychology

In contrast to 'cultural-historical' psychology, the theoretical trends that we refer to under the general umbrella of 'critical psychology' have emerged as politically engaged and as critical investigations of societal processes and institutions, focusing on such topics as discrimination and exclusion in terms of gender, race and class and the exercise of power through ideological means. However, the concepts and main principles that have animated this movement are also diverse and, on occasion, strongly contradictory. While the Latin American critical social psychology of the 1980s (Baro, Dobles, González Rey, Jiménez, Lane, Montero, Salazar) emphasised the complex unity of individuals and social reality and was especially critical of Latin American society, 'social constructionism' tended to consider the individual person as an epiphenomenon of discursive practices (e.g. Kenneth Gergen, Rom Harré, Jonathan Potter).

While largely developing independently, there have been occasional attempts to relate the two psychological currents or to take account, within each, of considerations and insights from the other. The 'Critical Psychology' of Holzkamp, for example, was closer to cultural-historical psychology in terms of fundamental principles, though critical of its social determinism and its lack of emphasis on the subject of thinking and action. In parallel, there have been attempts to extend the reach of cultural-historical theory to encompass both societal processes and everyday life experiences (Dreier, 1991, 2016; Teo, 2016; Tolman, 1991), topics that align more directly with the subject matter of 'critical psychology'.

Overall, therefore, the traditions of 'cultural-historical' and 'critical' psychology both have a common and fundamental interest in the social character of human psychological functioning, though they diverge, sometimes sharply, in terms of their assumptions, methods and subjects of investigation. At the same time, both traditions have tended equally to neglect the concrete study of everyday life activity and the relationship between the life experience of individuals and wider social processes.

Consequently, in the first part of the book, authors bring to the fore their own conceptual starting points, along with their theorisation on how critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology may or may not fruitfully interact. In Chap. 2 (Critical Psychology – Subjects in Situated Social Practices), Ole Dreier draws attention to how the theoretical approach of critical psychology, founded in Berlin by Holzkamp and colleagues, emerged as a driving force for thought that is still with us in psychology. Indeed, he argues that 'it exemplifies what a cultural-historical, critical psychology must comprise and how it can be constructed'. Dreier suggests that this approach offers subjects a way of making sense of living conditions where the societal nexus is 'ridden by contradictions of power' and where critical concepts can therefore help to clarify how they are entangled.

In Chap. 3 (Critical Psychology as Cultural-Historical Psychology: Political Dimensions and Limitations of Psychological Knowledge), Ian Parker introduces a critique of the essentialism, individualism and universalism of mainstream social psychology. Parker argues that 'contemporary "critical psychology" is always already necessarily social, and that as a form of critical cultural-historical psychology it is always already necessarily political'. Drawing upon work in critical psychology in Britain, he foregrounds the 'opportunities and dangers' for social justice that he sees as intimately linked with anti-capitalist struggle.

Struggle is also brought to the fore by Fernando González Rey and Albertina Mitjáns Martínez as they bring the fields of cultural-historical and critical psychologies into dialogue in Chap. 4 (Looking Towards a Productive Dialogue Between Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychologies). The authors suggest that a transcending of the current boundaries is needed and propose points for working together to advance psychology in a context of new and complex problems.

Part I concludes with a discussion by Thomas Teo in Chap. 5 (The Primacy of Critical Theory and the Relevance of the Psychological Humanities) on why *Critical Theory* could act as an umbrella term to encompass both fields of psychology. Teo's premise is that the divergent pathways of the two psychologies allow for mutual critiques and possible reconciliations since they have common roots. He puts forward a series of important topics that can be jointly advanced through his proposed nexus, including 'society-individual nexus, the historicity of knowledge, and the ethical-political worldviews that engender these research programs'.

Overall, the contributions in Part I may lead us to the view that critical psychologies and cultural-historical approaches have common sources but have separated in their historical trajectories. This, we argue, has given new opportunities for theoretical and empirical work both within and across the two approaches that are taken up in Part II.

Part II: Pathways of Renovation: Critiques and Innovations Within Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology

In Part II, contributions centre on critical re-appraisals or challenges to the foundational principles of both psychological traditions and dominant interpretations of psychological phenomena within those traditions.

The scope and orientation of cultural-historical psychology have begun to be questioned by a number of authors from different perspectives, bringing such topics as imagination, sense, *perezhivanie*, motivation, subjectivity and consciousness into more intense focus and bringing to bear new approaches to the study of activity and language (Daniels, 2012; González Rey, 2009, 2014, 2017; Jones, 2009; Yasnitsky, 2010, 2012; Zavershneva, 2010; Zinchenko, 2009). In addition, the discovery and ongoing study of the Vygotsky archive has inspired creative, critical interrogation of key concepts within Vygotskian theory, as well as disrupting established assumptions about its history and development.

In Chap. 6 (Can the Concept of Activity Be Considered as a Theoretical Tool for Critical Psychologies?), Fernando González Rey invites readers to consider if the concept of activity can be considered as a theoretical tool for critical psychologies, noting a metamorphosis undergone by the concept of activity as understood within cultural-historical psychology in its subsequent reification as a universal concept in the work of A. N. Leontiev. González Rey suggests that this transformation acted as a tool for conceptualising psychology as a Marxist dogma. More specifically, he suggests that 'the concept of activity, as defined by Leontiev, became a tool for the passive adaptation of, and control over, human beings through external operations with objects that become motives of human behavior after meeting human needs'. For this reason, the very concept of 'activity' becomes a central target for critical analysis.

Other scholars emphasise the importance of keeping a wide, open and flexible position about what could be considered a critical psychology in different developmental contexts. In Chap. 7 (Decolonising Childhood, Reconceptualising Distress: A Critical Psychological Approach to (Deconstructing) Child Well-Being), Erica Burman confronts the issue of decolonising childhood (the 'child as method') through her discussion of the reconceptualising of distress. Burman shows how the whole area of mental well-being can be opened up for critical debate through a lens that brings into focus principles of critical psychology, critical pedagogy, childhood studies and Fanonian perspectives. Amidst the complexities of research in mental health, Burman argues for the need for both critical and cultural-historical psychology.

A further aspect of the relation between critical and cultural-historical psychology is posed by Peter E Jones in Chap. 8 (Psychology and Psychologies 'from the Language End': Critical Reflections) in his discussion of psychology and psychologies 'from the language end'. Jones argues for systematic critical investigation of the conceptions of language and communication, which are central to psychological theories and principles. Focusing primarily on cultural-historical theory, Jones

argues that such core concepts of mediation, internalisation, meaning and sense ‘betray the influence of mechanistic and decontextualizing perspectives on semiotic and linguistic activity’ and presents a case for an ‘actional-integrative’ approach to sign-making’.

In keeping with other authors, Marilyn Fleer, Liang Li and Zhonglian Yan in Chap. 9 (Problematising Pedagogical Imports and Creating new Conditions for Children’s Development: A Case from China) draw upon the methodological principles and concepts of both critical psychology and cultural-historical theory for understanding the play practices and conditions for structuring play in one kindergarten from one province in China. In particular, the authors problematise the cultural and conceptual implications and effects of Western pedagogical imports in the Chinese context. The authors propose new ways of supporting children’s development that speak back to the colonising influence of Western thought.

In Chap. 10 (Nationalism and/or Developing Understanding of Society?) Athanasios Marvakis interrogates conceptions of nationalism through theoretical work on the concept of society in German critical psychology and the work of Meacham and Riegel (1978). Putting into dynamic interrelation the complementary socio-psychological processes of de-centration and re-centration, Marvakis argues that ‘we have to go beyond “reciprocity” and – using abstract tools like concepts – to take in account the “societal mediatedness of individual existence” (Holzkamp 1983) in its psychic aspects’.

The content of the contributions in Parts I and II provides a strong foundation from which to draw insights, to note similarities and to explicate differences within and across the two psychological traditions, thereby speaking directly to the purpose of the book: to foster discussion about how these two great currents of psychological thinking may learn from and get inspiration from each other. Such a dialogue is an opportunity to think self-critically, to ask new questions about the concept of human development and to advance new positions on the nature of human sociality and the future of humanity.

Part III: The Emerging Themes

We conclude the book in Part III with an introduction to the 11th and final chapter: Fernando González Rey’s ‘The Two Pathways of Vygotsky’s Legacy: The Critical and Non-critical Co-existing Positions in Vygotsky’s Thought’.

In our introduction, we reflect on the most important themes that have emerged through the contributions of Parts I and II and that are further advanced in González Rey’s re-appraisal of Vygotsky’s intellectual development in his late work. These themes, stemming from and developed in dialogue between representatives of our two principal traditions of psychological theory, have identified areas of common ground, divergences in principles and methodology and, most importantly, future pathways along which such differences – taken in their historical and social

contexts – may be jointly addressed and, perhaps, fruitfully superseded in a new psychological synthesis.

In that light, Fernando González Rey points the way to new possibilities for dialogue and productive collaboration between the two psychological traditions through a detailed critical re-evaluation of Vygotsky's theoretical development and, in particular, of Vygotsky's groping towards a new 'holistic' psychological perspective in the last years of his life.

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Part I
Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology: Entering a Dialogue

Introduction

The four contributions in this first part initiate the dialogic encounter between cultural-historical psychology and critical psychology which is pursued in varying ways and levels throughout the book. From their own perspectives, the authors of each chapter re-examine the fundamental principles of these two traditions and the grounds on which their relationship may be rearticulated in advancing psychological theory overall.

Ole Dreier (Chap. 2, 'Critical Psychology – Subjects in Situated Social Practices') begins by revisiting the development of critical psychology in the work of Holzkamp and colleagues. Dreier reaffirms the enduring significance of the critical conceptual tools this approach provides for our understanding of living conditions within a societal nexus 'ridden by contradictions of power', arguing that 'it exemplifies what a cultural-historical, critical psychology must comprise and how it can be constructed'.

Ian Parker (Chap. 3, 'Critical Psychology as Cultural-Historical Psychology: Political Dimensions and Limitations of Psychological Knowledge') positions critical psychology in opposition to the essentialism, individualism and universalism of mainstream social psychology. Parker argues for a 'critical cultural-historical psychology' which 'is always already necessarily political' and, drawing on research in Britain, brings out the implications of such work for social justice in the anti-capitalist struggle.

Fernando González Rey and Albertina Mitjáns Martínez (Chap. 4, 'Looking Towards a Productive Dialogue Between Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychologies') critically explore the historical divergence and present divisions between the fields of cultural-historical and critical psychology. In a context of new and complex problems faced by humanity, the authors suggest a transcending of the existing disciplinary boundaries is both possible and necessary and propose points around which collaborative work for advancing psychology may proceed.

Thomas Teo (Chap. 5, 'The Primacy of Critical Theory and the Relevance of the Psychological Humanities') argues that the distinct pathways of the two psychological schools have diverged from common roots, making possible mutual critique and eventual reconciliation in a unified 'critical theory'. He proposes a research agenda for the 'psychological humanities', including such topics as 'society-individual nexus, the historicity of knowledge and the ethical-political worldviews that engender these research programmes', through which such a collaborative project could be advanced.

Following on from Part I, the five chapters in Part II ('Pathways of Renovation: Critiques and Innovations Within Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology') take the dialogue further by providing a more in-depth critical examination of particular theoretical principles or applications of either or both psychological traditions. In this way, the common problems as well as the complementary contributions of these traditions can be more clearly identified with a view to mutual clarification and possible reconciliation of such divergent intellectual pathways in psychology.

Chapter 2
Critical Psychology: Subjects in Situated Social Practices

Ole Dreier

Abstract This chapter presents the theoretical approach of critical psychology founded in Berlin by Holzkamp and a group of colleagues. The open-ended development of this conception is in focus. As a whole, it exemplifies what a cultural-historical, critical psychology must comprise and how it can be constructed. The subject matter of psychology is grasped as involved in nexuses of social practice. Individual human beings are basically grasped from the standpoint and perspective of individual subjects participating as agents in relation to their societally mediated scopes of possibilities. They are also grasped as involved in conducting their everyday lives in complex structures of social practice. This theoretical conception is critical in relation to mainstream psychology and to societal relations of contradictory interests, inequalities and exclusions. It also offers subjects living in societal nexuses ridden by contradictions of power and interest critical concepts to clarify how they are entangled in such contradictory nexuses and how they may deal with them and take part in changing them in the direction of more generalized societal scopes and relations.

The approach of critical psychology was founded by Holzkamp and a group of colleagues at the Free University in Berlin in the early 1970s in the wake of the student movement of 1968 and New Left Marxism. I joined this collaboration a few years later. Because the research literature of critical psychology is not widely published in English, this chapter gives an overview over its most important sources of inspiration, development, and current state.

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The Establishment of Critical Psychology

The primary inspiration for critical psychology in psychology was Leontiev's cultural-historical approach to activity theory in "Problems of the development of the mind" (1979, German edition 1973). In the 1970s, critical psychologists renewed Leontiev's analysis of the psycho-phylogeny of the human mind and the emergence of the societal nature of human beings. The results are published in a German book series on critical psychology (e.g., Holzkamp, 1973; Osterkamp, 1975; Schurig, 1976; in English, Holzkamp, 1987; Tolman, 1994). The evolution of psychological capacities is here reanalyzed in the evolutionary path leading to the emergence of the human species. The psychological capacities of a species are grasped on the basis of the animal-environment nexus characteristic of this species. The core question is which psychological capacities are involved in which animal activity in relation to which vital conditions and, thus, in the survival of this species in this environment. The transition from primarily fixed to primarily modifiable psychological capacities plays a key role in the psycho-phylogenetic evolution. Fixed capacities enable an animal to act in the same way on the same vital conditions in its environment. But modifiable psychological capacities enable it to modify its activities and how it relates to which conditions in its environment. Capacities are modified in and through activity in the animal-environment nexus and this modification of capacities and activities is called learning. The analysis of the psycho-phylogeny traces the evolution of species-specific kinds of learning towards more comprehensive and powerful ones, that is, from being able to modify simple responses to particular conditions in the environment to modifying complex activities related to complex properties and relations in the environment and across the animal's life span. Besides involving broader ranges of activities and environmental conditions in securing their survival, species, thus, become able to change and optimize their animal-environment nexus in response to vital changes in their environment which, otherwise, might have led to their extinction. Along the path of psycho-phylogeny towards the emergence of the human species, the composition, dynamics, and qualities of species-specific animal-environment nexuses become increasingly complex and modifiable. This includes the emergence and strengthening of modifiable cognition, emotion, and needs. It is also inseparably linked with the evolution of neural and other aspects of the body and of prehuman forms of sociability and culture. The psycho-phylogenetic evolution culminates when modifiability becomes prevalent in the functioning and survival of the species.

On this basis, the transition sets in from a primarily phylogenetic, animal-environment nexus to a primarily sociogenic, human-society nexus. It brings about a sociocultural nexus of human life which is fixed in social and cultural artefacts, arrangements, and ways of life and reproduced and changed by its members. This nexus reaches into the future by providing for and taking care of future life conditions and by being passed on, appropriated, and changed on a new basis in future human activity, thus creating new needs for learning. The sociocultural artefacts and arrangements hold a general meaning as brought about, reproduced, and changed by

human beings and as of general use for realizing certain general human needs and purposes in this nexus. Depending on his or her position in the societal nexus, an individual human subject has access to, or is excluded from, using certain artefacts and arrangements in his or her individual human-society nexus. To the extent that they are available to him or her, they constitute possibilities for him or her which he or she may realize in his or her activity. So meaningful conditions do not causally determine his or her individual activity. They make up his or her scope of possibilities for doing certain things. While their social meaning centers on what can be done with them, their subjective meaning centers on how this matters to particular subjects. The immediate situation of an individual human subject is characterized by a – more or less restricted or wide-ranging – scope of possibilities which is mediated by the overall social structure. Individual subjects must develop abilities that are necessary and appropriate to realize these possibilities. These individual abilities constitute their individual agency (*Handlungsfähigkeit*). Which possibilities an individual subject then realizes depends on the relationship between his or her possibilities, his or her developed agency, and his or her needs and interests. However, individual subjects do not live and develop by their own powers alone but by taking part in social practices together with others. The possibilities that matter to them matter to others too. They are brought about, shared, and enjoyed in social practices with others. They are "irreducibly social goods" (Taylor, 1995) with an irreducibly social meaning. In the sociocultural forms of life characteristic of human beings, individual subjects are particular participants taking part in particular ways in reproducing and changing their social and individual scopes of possibilities. Individual agency must be conceived as a participatory agency.

Within this framework, critical psychologists reconceptualized the psychology of perception, cognition, thinking, problem solving, emotion, motivation, needs, and learning. For instance, Osterkamp (1975, 1976, 1991) conceives human emotion as inextricably but variably linked with a subject's cognition, agency, and activity in her nexus. A subject's emotions evaluate the subjective meaning of her cognitively captured conditions in her nexus with the possibilities for action they present. Different emotions signify different evaluations and mediate different activities. Emotions tune the subject in on subjectively particularly important aspects in the multitude of cognized conditions in his or her nexus of activity – like in the child play of searching for hidden objects by tuning in on what is "hot and cold" (Bruschlinski & Tichomirow, 1975). Emotion and cognition are, thus, not separate processes and a subject never expresses only one or the other. They are aspects in interplay in the psychological functioning of the subject and inseparably linked with and in his or her activity in his or her sociocultural nexus. Osterkamp, thus, goes against a purely internal, mentalist notion of emotion and other psychological processes. She also stresses that, due to the complexity of the environmental nexus with multiple, interrelated conditions, the subject's emotional state has a "complex quality" with "an overall emotional tone" which the subject may "break down (in) its unitary complexity and trace its particular qualities to their objective sources" (Osterkamp, 1991, p. 104–5). The subject may, thus, differentiate, articulate, and elucidate its emotional evaluations, as well as unravel diverse and

contradictory evaluations as mixed feelings in the, at first, complex quality of the overall emotional tone. While the subject sometimes acts on first impulse, he or she may also act on the basis of evaluating his or her scope of possibilities in his or her overall situation, thus taking the complexity of his or her nexus into account in relation to his or her complex needs and present-future life situation. What to do is far from always self-evident to the subject. It must be found out and may be problematic and contradictory.

Critical psychology used its general approach and conception of the societal nature of human beings to develop a set of critical, theoretical concepts about the psychological issues and phenomena of living in bourgeois societies. While human beings live by taking part in reproducing and changing the possibilities in their societal nexus, in bourgeois societies this nexus is ridden by conflicts of power and interest, exclusions, and contradictions which affect participants and their scopes of possibilities and create conflicts between them and for them. The duality of reproducing and changing is then overlaid by a duality between a restrictive and a generalized agency with associated psychological processes. Generalized agency is seen when subjects are in a situation where it is possible to expand their scope of possibilities and command over their social conditions together with others. Restrictive agency is seen when subjects are in a situation where they must refrain from doing so because counterreactions from powerful others would threaten and aggravate their current situation so that they must arrange themselves within its limits. Likewise, interpersonal relations turn into subject relations when participants join in the pursuit of common concerns or instrumental relations when they are divided in the pursuit of contrary interests and possibilities. Instrumental relations are marked by issues of control and competition with participants pursuing their life chances at the expense of others, instrumentalizing others in these pursuits by usurping their dependency and by introducing unequal compromises and compensations. Blaming others for the failure of such pursuits by attributing problematic, allegedly fixed personal characteristics to them is part of instrumental relations too. The traditional concept of personality traits as a fixed, situation-independent, internal cause of individual behavior lends itself to instrumentalizing purposes (Holzkamp, 2013c). By explaining an individual's situated behavior with such a concept, the dynamic functioning of the nexus of social practice is bracketed and attributed, as blame or merit, to an individual participant as an internal cause of its behavior beyond its control as a subject. As for human emotions (Osterkamp, 1976, 1991), the joint pursuit of concerns in subject relations promote the clarity, strength, and vigor of emotions, while the conflicting and contradictory emotional evaluations in instrumental relations may disturb or block the subject's activity and development of insight. The subject's emotions may, then, be fixed on seeking consensus with powerful others and on the ambivalences of support given and withdrawn and possibilities available and obstructed. Withdrawn, unclear emotions may channel the subject's thinking in safe, neutral directions. The certainty of feeling and engagement may be impaired, disturbed, or blocked and detached emotional evaluations may turn into an overall, diffuse subjective feeling of unrest. Osterkamp (1976) reinterprets the Freudian concept of the unconscious along these lines. She also distinguishes between

emotion, motivation, and compulsion. Emotions evaluate the present situation while motivation is an emotional evaluation of possibilities for reaching a future situation with an improved scope of possibilities and quality of well-being. Compulsion is an emotional evaluation of having to do something although it does not improve one's current scope of possibilities and well-being but because they would, otherwise, be threatened. Finally, we must note that the distinction between generalized and restrictive agency is an analytic distinction which does not refer to separate realities. In practice, they are mixed in contradictory ways which vary across time, activities, relations, and nexuses. Thus, subjects' attempts to expand their joint and individual scopes of possibilities and strengthen their subject relations and generalized agency take place in nexuses where power and conflicts are also present, interfere, and must be taken into account. These distinctions are analytic tools for participants to realize such complexities, sort them out, and find ways to deal with them.

From the start, the approach of critical psychology rests on three basic characteristics that are sustained and elaborated in later work. First, the predominant capacities of human beings are not fixed but modifiable potentialities. This goes against the – im- or explicit – genetic determinism in attributing fixed capacities to human beings which abounds in psychology. Learning is, thus, a genetically given, species-specific and modifiable capacity, that is, a potentiality. Second, the approach goes against the environmental determinism in most traditional psychology which studies external stimuli as independent causes of an internal, individual psychological processing and merely considers the ensuing individual behavior/activity as its output. Third, the approach uses a triatic basic model of explanation as an animal-activity-environment or a human-activity-society. Both are conceived as a nexus (Zusammenhang), that is, as the three parts, literally, hanging together inseparably and dynamically. Subjective and psychological processes always occur in and relate to a nexus. They hang together in various ways with varying activities in varying nexuses. Their qualities and course are affected by their position in the nexus of practice and its dynamics, including how it is reproduced and changed. They must be grasped accordingly.

Psychology from the Standpoint and Perspective of the Subject in a Societal Nexus

In its second period of development in the 1980s, critical psychology is elaborated by reconsidering what it takes to be a critical science of the subject. As mentioned earlier, the scope of possibilities of individual subjects in their immediate situation is mediated by the overall societal nexus of meaning/possibility and activity. Psychology must capture the potentialities human beings need to be able to live in such a nexus and take part in reproducing and changing it. But it must conceptualize them in accordance with how they are given to individual subjects from their first-person perspective and standpoint in their immediate situation in an overall societal

nexus. This claim is inspired by phenomenology reconsidered through Marx's call to conceive reality and our domain of study as "sensuous human activity, practice, (…) subjectively" rather than as an object and contemplatively (1976, p. 5). The concept of subjectivity is, thus, grounded in the basic, cultural-historical quality of human life with its dynamic nexus of subject-activity-society.

The core characteristic of the overall subjective quality of individual human agency is defined as subjective "*Befindlichkeit*" (Holzkamp, 1983). This term has no direct English translation. It denotes a complex, subjective emotional-experiential state – often called a state of mind or well-being – referring to how I am (feeling) and what I am, hence, inclined to do. The concept comes close to Vygotsky's notion of subjective "*perezhivanie*" as a complex emotional experience (González Rey, 2014, p. 67–8) combining cognition and emotion. But a subject's *Befindlichkeit* tunes her in on her scope of possibilities and guides her activity which her psychological functioning is inextricably involved in. Moreover, *Befindlichkeit* also literally denotes where I am (where I find myself), that is, in my immediate situation in an overall societal nexus. It has a situated quality. In contrast to Heidegger's (1977) notion of the term, a human subject is seen as situated and acting within an overall societal nexus not just as dwelling in being-in-the-world.

A subject's *Befindlichkeit* has a complex quality grounded in the relation between his or her needs and interests and his or her scope of possibilities. He or she may act on its immediate quality or differentiate, articulate, problematize, and unravel its contradictory aspects in guiding his or her activity. In fact, this is where the concept of consciousness belongs in the theoretical system. Consciousness is a human quality in the subject's situated relation to his or her scope of possibilities in a complex societal nexus (Holzkamp, 1983). In such a nexus, a conscious relation to his or her situation is called for in selecting possibilities and realizing them in activities. In doing so, he or she must be able to grasp how aspects of the nexus hang together dynamically and how he or she can combine, balance off, juxtapose, influence, and realize them in his or her activity. Consciousness has an analytic potential but is not a purely cognitive affair. It rests on a cognitive-emotional interplay in relation to activity in a complex nexus. Insisting on a unity of activity and consciousness (Rubinstein, 1973) is, then, not enough. It leaves the subject hanging in the air in relation to his or her situated participation in a structurally arranged, dynamic nexus of social practice where consciousness and activity are involved and realized. Likewise, Holzkamp (1983) grasps human thinking as capturing relations between the nexus of societal practice and the subject's participation in reproducing, changing, and bringing aspects thereof about through his or her activity in her situation. And motivation is grasped as a subject's evaluation of his or her possibilities for doing so which may expand his or her possibilities and improve his or her *Befindlichkeit*. Finally, a concept of societal forms of thinking and language is grounded in relation to the societal structure of possibilities/meaning.

Earlier concepts about the subject's cognition, emotion, needs, etc. are used in the 1980s but not distinctly revised and reintegrated. Focus has shifted to subjective agency (*Handlungsfähigkeit/Befindlichkeit*) and its relation to the subject's needs and interests, on the one hand, and his or her situated involvement in the societal

nexus of practice, on the other. The duality between restrictive and generalizing agency is also explicitly addressed: as a level of immediate appearances and *Befindlichkeit* in instrumental relations in conflicts of power and interests, on the one hand, and as penetrating it in comprehending the societal mediatedness of this situation in connection with expanding and generalizing scopes of possibilities in subject relationships, on the other hand.

A further elaboration occurs in the 1980s. In line with trends in the philosophy of action, it is argued that human action – rather than being causally determined – is grounded in subjective reasons for action (Holzkamp, 2013a; Markard, 2009). This underlines the anti-determinist stance on human subjectivity and action and strengthens the link between subjective *Befindlichkeit* and activity through a subject's gradual, more or less comprehensive, clarification of his or her subjective reasons. These reasons are not strictly cognitive and rationalistic. They are grounded in the subject's cognitive-emotional *Befindlichkeit* in relation to her needs and interests, on the one hand, and his or her scope of possibilities in his or her nexus, on the other. Moreover, a subject cannot act concurrently on all possibilities in his or her complex scope of possibilities. He or she must select some possibilities to realize in his or her current action. In doing so, he or she extracts certain premises of his or her action from his or her relationship to his or her complex constellation of meaningful possibilities in his or her situation. A subject's action then comes to rest on a selective pattern of reasons and premises. This discourse on reasons is viewed as the language of a psychological science from the standpoint of the subject where subjective reasons are given as my reasons in my first-person standpoint and perspective. Regardless of how obvious or problematic a subject's activities may appear from the third-person standpoint and perspective of others – including researchers and professional experts – we only grasp a subject's actions by capturing the subjective reasons they are grounded in.

How, then, can a science of the subject from the first-person standpoint and perspective of my reasons be a critical science of the subject? It can study how restricted and contradictory scopes of possibilities due to power, exclusion, etc. affect the premises of subjects' reasons for action and how subjects may clarify and address them. In analyzing such contradictions, the conception of the duality of restrictive and generalizing agency and *Befindlichkeit* is combined with the discourse on reasons. This leads to a self-critical first-person approach to analyzing how problematic reasons, *Befindlichkeit*, agency, needs, and interests are affected by living in contradictory societal relations (e.g., Osterkamp, 1996).

Expanding Foundation in Social Practice

A third period in the development of critical psychology begins in the 1990s. Two new, connected strands of research expand its foundation in ongoing social practices.

The first strand goes beyond capturing subjects in their immediate situation in relation to an overall structure of society by acknowledging that the situation

belongs to a scene in a subject's conduct of everyday life (Bader & Weber, 2016; Dreier, 2008a, 2011b, 2016; Holzkamp, 2013d, 2016; Osterkamp, 2001; Schraube & Højholt 2016). The concept of conduct of everyday life was introduced by Weber (1952). It stresses that, in the complex arrangements of modern societies, human subjects must seek to integrate the demands from various parts of their everyday life by conducting it so that they may accomplish what matters most to them and prevent their life from falling apart. The scene, in which a subject is presently located, is a particular part of his or her complex everyday life. Its subjective meaning to him or her and his or her *Befindlichkeit* and reasons for action in it are not only mediated by the overall structure of society but also by its status in the composition of his or her everyday life. Grounding critical psychology in the subject's conduct of everyday life in social practice expands the worldliness of its conception (Holzkamp, 2013b).

It also leads to introducing further concepts. Routines of everyday life are conceived as economizing and coordinating elementary parts of what must be done so that what really matters may unfold and be pursued. Due to the complexity of everyday life, a subject must also develop an understanding of him- or herself as the person who conducts his or her life in his or her way. His or her self-understanding is, thus, grounded in how he or she goes about living his or her everyday life and it guides his or her conduct of it. There is an active character to his or her self-understanding as involved in his or her activities in the nexus of his or her conduct of everyday life in an overall societal nexus. Because subjects live with others in a societal practice, they clarify and develop their self-understandings in relation with each other. They take part in these clarifications from their respective first-person perspectives and may recognize how their reciprocal perspectives are grounded in their interrelated positions in their conduct of everyday life in the nexus of social practice (Holzkamp, 2016). The concepts of critical psychology offer subjects a meta-subjective frame of understanding for such endeavors in research encounters and elsewhere.

In the contradictory nexus of interests and power of a capitalist society, subjects' conduct of everyday life, self-understanding, reasons, *Befindlichkeit*, and agency become problematic. A critical conception and research on their conduct of everyday life may clarify these problematics and identify other ways of dealing with them. Based on the duality of restrictive and generalized agency, we may, e.g., address issues of restrictive self-deception and other ruses, of giving up and accommodating as being "realistic," and of shirking co-responsibilities for the life of others and our social practices. The problematics of restrictive agency may fuel subjects' attempts to increase their influence over their conditions of life. As the title of Osterkamp (2016) puts it, "There is no right life in the wrong one: recognizing this dilemma is the first step out of it." Addressing such issues in joint critical pursuits, subjects may seek to overcome their tendencies of shielding, exclusion, and othering and promote more generalized self-understandings assisted by a critical stance that is general in the proper sense of the term as conceived to include everybody from their standpoint and perspective. Such a culture of critique of subjectivity is a necessary part of a subjectively relevant social critique. It may reveal aspects of

subjectivity otherwise barely mentioned and researched. Researchers may learn as much from these endeavors because they are as involved in the issues of living everyday lives in a contradictory societal nexus. A critical stance from an external perspective really is a contradiction in terms. Subjects may also learn more from critical reflections together with others than from private self-reflections which easily lead them astray (Osterkamp, 2003).

The second strand is based on practice research (Dreier, 2008a; Markard et al., 2000). Critical psychologists increasingly carry out empirical studies of subjects in concrete social practices – including the social practices of psychological practitioners. "Theory-practice conferences" with researchers and practitioners, student projects, and research by practitioners educated in critical psychology stimulate this trend. It addresses professional practices in various fields, clients, patients and other users, children of various ages, students, refugees, etc. And it focuses on what goes on in an institutional setting while considering the impacts of other relevant settings therein. It also follows subjects' moves into other relevant settings. This type of research fuels several conceptual developments (Dreier, 2008a).

It becomes obvious that situations and scenes are part of a social practice in a local social context. What goes on here hangs together dynamically as a nexus of social practice. The social context is set up, that is, socio-materially arranged, in a way that reflects the societal purposes and contradictory interests of its practice and the historical experiences and meanings of carrying it out. A particular set of subjects have access to take part in this social practice on different, more or less well-defined positions while others are excluded. On their different positions, subjects face different scopes of possibilities, tasks, and responsibilities and they are differently involved in the issues of power, conflicts, and contradictions of this social practice. The participants also make interpersonal arrangements of their collaborations and divisions and of the sequence of tasks and scenes across the day.

The social practice of a society stretches across many different local contexts. The structural arrangement of practice contexts, and the ways in which they are separated and linked, is an important feature of a society's structure. If we only consider how a local contextual practice – or a particular scene in it – is mediated by an overall societal structure, we disregard the significance of the arrangement of this local context and its links with other contexts in the social practice of this society.

As embodied beings, human subjects are always taking part in a situated way in the social practice of a local context. Compared to their co-participants, they take part in a particular way mediated by their position. And compared to this social practice as a whole, they take part in a partial way depending on which possibilities they select, configure, and address from their position. Human subjects live as situated participants and their activity is situated participation. Acknowledging this, we call individual subjects participants and their activity personal social practice. Human interaction, communication, and relations are also aspects of situated participation in a social practice. Subjective agency and *Befindlichkeit*, reasons and interests, and concerns and conflicts belong to situated individual participants too. Learning and development also take place in a situated social practice where partici-

pants highlight, configure, and pursue certain aspects and links while setting aside others, for the moment or altogether (Dreier, 2008a, 2008b; Lave & Wenger 1991).

Subjects living in a society structurally arranged in a multitude of separated and linked local practice contexts take part in more than one social practice by moving into and across various contexts. They then encounter various impacts of the overall societal nexus and take part in local nexuses of social practice with varying purposes and arrangements, technologies and co-participants, positions and scopes of possibilities, responsibilities and tasks, and conflicts of power and interest. Their modes of participation, *Befindlichkeit*, abilities, concerns, conflicts, etc. vary accordingly.

Our theories must incorporate this variety and complexity in the psychological functioning of human subjects. It challenges mainstream psychology's conception of the relation between internal and external processes in subjects' activities. By assuming that subjects always simply apply general abilities, knowledge, etc., mainstream psychology captures the interplay between mental processes, contexts, and practices as essentially always the same. But it is situated and varying so that mental processes unfold other ways of connecting and other dynamics. We must, hence, ask in which dynamic nexus of practice psychological processes take place, what they relate to, and which part they play herein. The mainstream view on the relation between mental faculties and activity/social practice must be revised by insisting on grounding the former in their particular, situated relations in the latter. Human thinking and motivation are, then, not defined as possessing and applying their general characteristics but as aspects of subjects' practice in and across various, structurally arranged local nexuses of social practice where they reveal common and varying qualities. Human learning is also reconceptualized as situated and varying acquisition and uses of abilities, knowledge, and understandings in contextual social practices (Lave, 1988).

The structural arrangements of a society include arrangements for participants' trajectories into and through particular institutions. Educational institutions, for instance, are generally arranged in age-graded tracks, time tables and breaks, subjects and curricula, and lessons and exercises. Students must arrange and realize their personal trajectories of participation and learning in relation hereto (Dreier, 2008b). Moreover, subjects pursue many personal concerns across different social contexts by composing personal trajectories of participation across particular contexts which, together, offer the best varied scopes for realizing these concerns. They find out where to go and how best to take part in various practices in order to affect or come to know more about a personal or societal issue. Clients in therapy, for instance, not only learn about and change their problem in sessions with their therapist. They do so across many different contexts and scenes of their everyday life where they draw on diverse sources for understanding and overcoming it and find possibilities and opportunities for pursuing changes within and across them (Dreier, 2008a). This makes them aware of other aspects, links, qualities, changeabilities, and nexuses of their problem. Their experience of it, of its dynamics and of how it emerges and passes, comes to reflect its varied meaning in varied nexuses. A situated understanding of their problem as grounded in its particular status and meaning

in varied nexuses gradually replaces their, at first, often abstract notion of it as caused by a peculiar characteristic or force inside them. Combined with their sessions somehow, this brings about a composed, many-sided understanding and pursuit of change where they learn in varying ways from diverse sources in different nexuses in a course of learning in social practice that is situated, occasioned, interrupted, picked up again, reconsidered, and open-ended.

However, problems and pursuits in trajectories are embedded in a subject's conduct of everyday life and affected by their status and meaning in it. Overcoming the problem treated in an ongoing therapy is, thus, far from the only concern a subject must pursue in his or her everyday life. He or she must find scopes for pursuing it in his or her conduct of everyday life which he or she may have to change if he or she is to succeed. Approaching the concept of conduct of everyday life from practice research projects underlines the socio-spatial complexity and arrangements of social practice and subjects' movements and accomplishment of their conduct of everyday life therein. It leads to asking how subjects go about conducting – this and other parts of – their everyday life with various others across social contexts. And it underlines the situated variability of their conduct of everyday life and the varying status and meaning of particular issues in contexts variously linked with their conduct of everyday life and the overall societal nexus. Subjects' conduct of everyday life is coordinated with the societal arrangements for everyday life and with their co-participants in its various parts. Routines hold personal preferences and must support, and not get in the way of, priorities in their conduct of everyday life. They must be open, flexible, and coordinated with various others in various parts of their everyday life. A subject's self-understanding reflects how he or she situates him- or herself, takes part in, and is committed to particular practices across particular social contexts and, thus, to particular places, activities, and co-participants. The concept of conduct of everyday life, thus, elaborates the conception of individual subjectivity, self-understanding, and personhood in a concretely grounded way (Dreier, 2011b, 2016). It also opens a new field of research on subjects' learning in and about their conduct of everyday life (Dreier, 2015; Schraube & Marvakis, 2016).

These insights from practice research have consequences for comprehending expert practices and interventions. Research mostly considers expert practices as secluded practices where experts cause a change in somebody else based on abstract knowledge of general relations between variables. Practice research reconsiders them as based on clients', students', or other users' pursuits across the contexts of their ordinary everyday life plus their participation – for a period of time – in this expert practice (Dreier, 2008a, 2015). The secluded arrangements of expert practices should not make us overlook that they are mostly meant to work elsewhere beyond their boundary. We reach a more adequate understanding of how expert practices and interventions work by holding on to the literal meaning of "intervenere" as coming in between much else in and across various nexuses of contextual practices (Dreier, 2011a). Our studies of interventions illuminate the realities, possibilities, difficulties, and limitations of such practices for the different parties involved, redefine how they work, and thus identify what may be reformed and improved. This makes them relevant for the social practices of psychologists and

other professionals and for reconsidering and changing these practices. Practice research projects with practitioners in various fields of social practice also give access to other research populations and stimulate the conceptual development in a concrete, historical way.

Insights from practice research about social practices of research stimulate an interest in reconsidering research and its methodologies as cultural-historical and concretely situated practices akin to trends in the social studies of science. Mainstream science defines research by methods conceived as abstract procedures to be adhered to regardless of context. What is studied is defined as mutually independent variables to be manipulated in a way that lends itself to a causal analysis of their relationship. All other possibly relevant aspects are bracketed from analysis. Holzkamp (1983, 2013d) defines subject scientific research as an encounter with a meta-subjective dialogue between co-researchers developing knowledge based on its mutual relevance and on their genuine interests and reasons in relation to the topic. Practice research projects suggest to consider research as a situated social practice with links to particular other social contexts which the participating researchers and co-researchers take part in. The location, arrangement, and conduct of these encounters are to ensure a relevant pursuit of its topics. And the participants' engagements and statements therein are to be considered on the background of their participation in other contexts of their ongoing lives. What is more, research typically aims at abstracting generalizations from concrete nexuses and characterizing these generalities in and of themselves while all other features of these nexuses are disregarded. Instead, we seek to capture a topic, say learning or anxiety, as a varying aspect of varying nexuses by considering its appearances for situated reasons with situated meanings, dealings, and courses. We may identify and characterize common aspects of such learning and anxiety. But we must, first of all, grasp them as particular, varying aspects of varying dynamic nexuses of practice and characterize the patterns and variations in these nexuses. After all, this is where – and across which – they occur, have meaning, and can be dealt with and changed. So this is what we need to produce knowledge about in research (Dreier, 2019).

Final Remarks

My view on the development of critical psychology is now presented. An enormous amount of work lies ahead (Marvakis & Schraube, 2018). Much needs to be updated, revised, elaborated, and reintegrated. Its integration with similar, current approaches across disciplines must also be updated. Developing a conception is an open-ended pursuit, especially in a cultural-historical approach.

Critical psychology insists on broadening our conception of the mind by grounding it comprehensively and concretely in the world beyond the isolated, experimental situation and its extracted stimulus (Holzkamp, 2013b) as well as beyond relations, interactions, communications, dialogues, etc. It must, instead, be grounded in subjects' situated participation, from their first-person perspective, in structurally

arranged nexuses of social practice and in their conduct of everyday life across particular, contradictory nexuses of social practice. A cultural-historical approach to psychology must also ground its theoretical concepts in the historical genesis and developments of human beings and their societal forms of life. A theory unable to comprehend how human beings are able to take part in reproducing and changing their societal forms of life is an underdetermined "deadly" theory (Holzkamp, 1987). But psychology has paid scarce attention to how the mind is present and works in social practice although it is hard to deny the mind being in the body in participation therein. By not addressing this, we risk falling back into – or only slightly reinterpreting – traditional psychology's assumptions about the psyche. And by addressing this, we also grasp the restrictions and one-sidedness of conceptions in traditional psychology.

Emphasizing the scope of possibilities and developed potentialities, i.e., abilities, of human subjects, is a core aspect of a robust grounding of a first-person approach to human agency in the social practices where they live their lives. Structures of meaning are then grounded in relation to structures of possibilities and abilities are conceived as enabling their realization. If we grasp human change and development without grounding them in relation to subjects' possibilities, restrictions, and contradictions in social practice, our theory risks becoming discriminatory and illusory and losing its critical power. A critical psychology must also enable us to grasp the subjective problematics and contradictions of living in and contributing to change contradictory societal nexuses of practices.

This holds for our conception of subjective change, learning, and development too. Learning and development are ordinarily grasped as stable accomplishments with each step seen as a building block supporting the next step in the accumulation of general abilities as individual possessions. The significance of these abilities in and for social practices and for co-participants is not considered much, nor is how they may contribute to reproduce and change social practices. Analytically, we may distinguish between three types of learning and development in relation to social practice (Dreier, 2008a): first, learning and development aimed at becoming able to take part in an existing, unchanging social practice (this is how child development is usually studied); second, learning and development to become able to follow suit with changes in social practice (this is how lifelong learning is usually studied); and, third, learning and development to become able to take part in bringing about changes in aspects of an existing social practice (this is rarely studied). The first and third type do not consider that social practices vary and change all the while and afterwards, while the second merely focuses on subjects as readapting to such changes occurring beyond their reach and influence in contrast to the third type which considers subjects as bringing such changes about. It seems that we need to consider shifting constellations of the three types. We also need to consider outcomes of learning and development as nonpermanent. Instead, we need to focus on changes in the direction of learning and developmental processes where prior outcomes are revised and unlearned and their internal coherences problematized in an open-ended pursuit. Furthermore, we need to consider learning and development as fueled by problems, conflicts, and contradictions and as involved in subjects' con-

duct of their everyday life and their development of such a conduct (Holzkamp, 1993; Dreier, 2015). This includes considering the societal arrangements for children's learning and development in which and through which they must pursue their learning and development (Dreier, 2009; Højholt, 2016).

In conclusion, what was addressed in this chapter plus much more is necessary in a potent critical and cultural-historical theory that can be critical of theories and practices from the perspective of subjects living as participants in structures of social practice.

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Chapter 3
Critical Psychology as Cultural-Historical Psychology: Political Dimensions and Limitations of Psychological Knowledge

Ian Parker

Abstract This chapter explores the connection between the theory and practice of critical psychology, focusing upon the critique of essentialism, individualism and universalism of mainstream social psychology and laying the basis for an approach to politics and justice working in and against the discipline. I argue in this chapter that contemporary 'critical psychology' is always already necessarily social and that as a form of critical cultural-historical psychology, it is always already necessarily political. This political nature of cultural-historical psychology needs to be clarified, however, and to be contrasted with the ways in which 'politics' is sometimes understood in 'community psychology'. In this chapter I address questions of 'alienation', the ways critical psychology configures itself as a response to mainstream psychology as an ideological warrant for capitalism. I describe emerging areas of research in critical psychology, taking the particular example of critical psychology in Britain to illustrate the opportunities and dangers to our concern with social justice as intimately linked with anti-capitalist struggle.

The discipline of psychology has been shadowed ever since it began as a scientific enterprise at the end of the nineteenth century by traditions of critical analysis (Danziger, 1990). It has also, of course, been contradictory, with counter-discourses in and against the mainstream struggling to be heard. The new wave of critique in the form it now takes in Britain is starting to make inroads inside the discipline where it is now called 'critical psychology', but this is a diverse collection of arguments (Parker, 2011a). The conceptual resources we drew upon in the past were often based in political theories and practices that challenge taken-for-granted commonsensical images of human beings and what is often assumed to be their underlying nature and inability to change that nature through revolutionising social conditions.

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Political Critique

The key foundational argument that many critical psychologists make is that it is necessary to clarify the political role that psychology plays (Parker, 2007). We *politicise* psychology precisely because there is always a political agenda in psychological research and practice, but it is an agenda that psychologists either conceal or, in some cases, it is an agenda they have refused to allow themselves to think about. There are three aspects to this agenda, and these intertwined aspects operate with different weight and assume different functions context by context.

The first is the *individualism* that psychology has historically presupposed. This individualism strips out relational aspects of human action, and those aspects are then only reintroduced later as if they are 'variables'. In this way the very individuality of human experience, which derives its significance and value from histories of interaction with others, is betrayed. For example, 'prejudice' is targeted as a result of cognitive errors or emotional responses by each separate person, rather than as a function of socially structured patterns of exclusion and ideology. Group relations then become reduced to the activities of individuals (Billig, 1976).

The second aspect is *essentialism*, in which qualities of human activity are separated from each other so they can be subject to categorisation and refinement within a psychological model of the person. This is a distinctive version of reification, the turning of human activities into things; this essentialism then organises explanations of what people can do and cannot do in terms of fixed mechanisms or procedures. For example, a difficulty that a person or a group might face because they fail to conform to what is expected of them (either because they do not adapt to dominant ideological views of behaviour or because they do not correspond to what the dominant ideology takes to be the appropriate behaviour of a minority group) is given a label which names the problem (such as ADHD), and then the supposed entity that the label refers to is treated as the cause of the problem. This essentialises that which the label refers to, as if that were a thing inside the person (McHoul & Rapley, 2005).

The third aspect is *normalisation*, and this may operate either through the universalising of representations of human beings, usually with the effect of confirming the superiority of the culture from which the representations emanate. Or it may operate through segregation, in which there is a pathologisation of those who deviate from the norm of the host culture or the culture it is compared with.

Psy Complex

A useful way of stepping back from the assumptions psychology makes about its objects of study is to locate psychology in a wider network of theories and practices that individualise, essentialise and normalise social action. This we call the 'psy complex' (Ingleby, 1985). To locate psychology in a broader psy complex, then,

enables us to identify what it shares with those apparently competing approaches and to see more clearly how this psy complex operates in schools and companies and now in many spheres of public life, how it functions to describe and enforce good behaviour.

On the one hand, this work is, firstly, deeply *ideological*; that is, it provides an image of normal healthy well-adjusted individuals against which those who fail to fit can be assessed. The image of the individual subject, which psychology studies and then relays to the outside world, also conjures up an image of normal healthy social systems. So the ideological effect of psychology is both 'deep' inside the individual when it provides a model of how to behave and how to think, and it is more broadly and obviously political in the way it presupposes certain kinds of social conditions in which its version of the individual can flourish.

On the other hand, this work is, secondly, *material*, a material practice; that is, the surveillance and categorisation of the qualities of individuals on different dimensions – of 'intelligence' or 'personality', say – will often have life-shaping consequences. These consequences may include entry to certain schools, the provision of certain resources, prescription of different kinds of treatment and decisions about imprisonment. Throughout an individual's life, then, psychology can play a key role in determining how they placed, determining the conditions in which they relate to others and understand themselves.

The ideological and material dimensions of psychology are most apparent precisely in the way that the psy complex separates the mind as its main object of study from matter as mere behaviour. Here psychology reflects, reproduces and actively participates in the *separation of intellectual from manual labour*. This separation is a false opposition perpetrated by conditions of production in which specialised expertise governs what is then supposed to be simple brute physical movement. It fits well with the division between those who own and manage the means of production and those who are employed to produce surplus value (Mandel, 1974).

This means that we have a certain characterisation of psychology, which we can sum up in the following points: its gaze is directed at those outside the discipline who are assumed to be non-psychologists who are routinely deceived and misrepresented; it reduces phenomena to the level of the individual, and this reduction proceeds both downwards from the level of social processes and upwards from the level of physiological functions; it reproduces an abstracted model of behavioural sequences and cognitive mechanisms in which each individual is assumed to operate as a miniature version of the operational forms that define positivist investigation; it pretends to merely describe human activity, but this description requires a degree of declared or surreptitious interpretation that prescribes a correct version of events; it subscribes to a form of objectivity, fake neutrality which obscures the enduring role of personal, institutional and political stakes in the formulation of research questions.

Critical psychology is an approach which questions mainstream models of the person that individualise, essentialise and normalise behaviour and experience, and it encompasses the work of those who would like to make psychology more relevant and just to people than the discipline has so far and the work of those who conclude

that we should engage in critique to weaken psychological explanations in favour of more social, political accounts of exploitation and oppression. The new wave of 'critical psychology' that developed in the 1980s was very much influenced by feminist, Marxist and then 'post-structuralist' ideas and also looked to psychoanalysis to provide an alternative approach to experience (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984). Since then, we have emphasised the way that 'critical' approaches reflect the cultural and political context in which they have developed in different parts of the world, and the concern with cultural-historical critique is geared to the particular questions psychologists (and critical social psychologists) have to address (e.g. Dafermos, Marvakis, & Triliva, 2006; Dafermos, Marvakis, Mentinis, Painter, & Triliva, 2013). This is why I give a very general frame for 'critical psychology' in this chapter that gives space, I hope, for the many varieties of critical psychology, and why I need to also be specific about where I am coming from with my own context and my own version of critical psychology (Parker, 2015).

Critical Psychology in Britain

Now let us turn to critical psychology in Britain. Of course, everything I describe here about critical psychology is framed by the particular context in which I work, so this review and critique is itself in some sense 'British'. Critical psychology is different in different parts of the world. It is not a homogeneous approach, certainly not a sub-discipline of psychology with clearly defined theoretical and methodological premises. This is something that we have tried to acknowledge and explore in the issue of *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* devoted to 'global' critical psychology (Dafermos et al., 2006, 2013). And critical psychology is heterogeneous in Britain. Britain is, of course, a disunited kingdom, though it cannot be said that the separate cultures in Scotland, Wales, England, north and south and so on can be said to have given rise to distinctive forms of critical psychology. It is possible, however, to outline some of the different competing approaches that come under the broad heading of 'critical psychology' in Britain. For the moment I will reserve judgement on the extent to which these are critical and simply outline what these components are. There are four components.

A first strand is work around 'discourse'. 'Discourse analysis' was for some years a signifier for 'critical psychology' in Britain, and many of those who were drawn to discourse analysis thought it was effectively a 'critical psychology' (e.g. Burman, Aitken, et al., 1996). This then has an effect on the way we define critical psychology, because it brings into critical work the assumption that critical psychology should be in favour of 'qualitative' research as opposed to quantitative research. This assumption has been useful, for it has enabled us to tackle the assumption made by many mainstream psychologists themselves, that only quantitative research is properly scientific. Psychology as a discipline in the English-speaking world has been united not so much by conceptual agreement but by some extent of agreement on method, and this leads psychologists to view qualitative research as an additional

minor form of psychology or as superfluous (Banister et al., 2011). This is not the case in many other countries.

The other less helpful effect of this emphasis on qualitative research as critical is that it both leads us to imagine that quantitative research cannot be critical (a completely mistaken view, in my opinion), and it leads us to imagine that qualitative research is always necessarily critical (another error). In recent years, discourse analysis has been rehabilitated as part of psychology (Parker, 2012). The avowedly 'critical' aspect has been marginalised from discourse analysis as such. It has been confined to those carrying out 'social constructionist' research of some kind which is only loosely 'discursive'. There has been some very good social constructionist work in the field of mental health, for example (e.g. Harper, 1994). Some critical psychology is also found in the work of those who are combining discourse analysis with feminist perspectives (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995), or it has been reconfigured by those bringing in psychoanalytic perspectives alongside a study of discourse (e.g. Dashtipour, 2012).

A second component is research and activity around mental health and what marks this out as part of 'critical psychology' for a significant number of those involved is that it connects investigation with action. This is where some of the 'community psychology' initiatives that also aim to be critical do actually operate as a form of critical psychology. There are some researchers who are inspired by the participatory action research from Latin America, for example, who would now call what they do 'critical community psychology' (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, Siddiquee, 2011). Some work in 'disability studies' connects with this current of work (Grech, 2015).

Britain is not alone in this, but there is a particularly powerful activist movement in Britain of mental health service 'users' or 'survivors'. There have been since the 1960s groups like the Mental Patients Union and then groups such as Survivors Speak Out and the Hearing Voices Network (Spandler, 2006). Many of these groups have at some point been associated with the movement for 'democratic psychiatry' which was initially inspired by the Italian mental health reforms around Franco Basaglia (1987). The work of R. D. Laing and the 'anti-psychiatry' movement has been influential. This self-activity of mental health system users has meant that this component of 'critical psychology' has been more pragmatic, less concerned with theoretical debates. Even so there has been discussion in the movement of the work of Michel Foucault, some political connection with Marxist politics, some occasional connections with feminism and an uneasy alliance with some radical therapists (Parker, 1999). Unlike in continental Europe, psychoanalysis has been viewed by the British survivor movement as part of psychiatry rather than in contradiction to it, and so the links with therapy have been difficult (even though some of the key figures, such as R. D. Laing, were psychoanalysts).

Psychoanalysis as a third component of radical work has been a relatively recent approach to connect with the field of critical psychology. In Britain psychoanalysis has often been attractive to those breaking from mainstream psychology because it seems to work with subjectivity, something that mainstream psychology tries to avoid (Henriques et al., 1984). Psychoanalysis has also seemed less amenable to

quantification, and so we have again an assumption brought into play about the radical nature of qualitative research. Another reason has been the tendency of those involved in Marxist and feminist politics in the 1960s and 1970s to go into therapy, either as patients or to train as therapists. The individualisation of responses to exploitation and oppression has led activists to work on personal change after having given up on political change. There has been disagreement over what form of psychoanalysis would be useful.

Paradoxically, and partly as a function of the dominance of certain models in psychoanalytic and psychotherapy training in Britain, it has been what we can term the 'British Tradition' in psychoanalysis that has been more influential recently (Young, 1994), more than the ostensibly more radical Lacanian tradition from continental Europe (Parker, 2011b). There may also be a consequence here of the disenchantment among some on the left in Britain with the French political tradition that had been so important to them in their youth. The British Tradition, which includes the work of Melanie Klein, has been combined with qualitative research to try and 'deepen' the analysis and bring some rigour to it. The development of this 'psychosocial research' brings together some who were once self-defined as 'critical psychologists'. They use their commitment to psychoanalysis as the touchstone for an approach that combines individual and social levels of work (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

A fourth component has been more enduring as an actual form of critical psychology, even if it has not always been named as such. This fourth component is feminist research. The connection between theory and practice has been on the agenda for some of those involved, with recurring debates also about forms of organisation, over whether, for example, the feminist psychologists should be organised within the British Psychological Society or whether their organisation should include those who are not, formally-speaking, 'psychologists' (Burman, 1990). At some moments in the development of feminist psychology, there was a close link with discourse analysis, to the extent that 'discourse' operated as one of the signifiers of feminist research rather more than of critical psychology as such (Burman, Alldred, et al., 1996). At other moments, more recently, some feminist researchers have turned to conversation analysis to study the power apparatus in language that marginalises and oppresses women (e.g. Kitzinger, 2000). Some feminist psychologists have been involved in the radical mental health movement, though this has often tended to be more from the position of service providers, as therapists, than working alongside mental health system survivors, though some activist researchers have combined both positions (Haaken & Reavey, 2009).

A difficult and necessary argument in relation to psychology has been over the connection and disconnection between 'feminism' as a political critique and movement against patriarchy and 'feminisation' as attention to subjectivity that incorporates women into capitalism as a resource for the development of the service sector. The argument in the feminist movement that the 'personal' is 'political' has led some to reduce politics to personal response. This has had an effect in the field of 'psychosocial research', where those who reject the approach are sometimes

accused of being 'macho', of failing to acknowledge the importance of subjectivity (Hollway, 2008).

There are, then, some crucial connections between these four components of 'critical psychology' in Britain. There are contradictions between them but they sometimes have worked to mutually reinforce each other. It has then *been* difficult for other minor currents such as small groupings of followers of Gilles Deleuze to operate (e.g. Brown & Stenner, 2009) and even smaller groups of Marxists (Parker & Spears, 1996), and these minor currents have been at the margins of work around one or more of these four components. Each of these components addresses questions of cultural-historical critique: discourse analysis by focusing on the way that language frames our understanding of social problems, radical mental health politics by engaging with those affected by psychology and psychiatric practices, psychoanalysis by developing alternative approaches to the human subject that respect subjectivity and feminist approaches which provide a deeper understanding of relations of power and ideology.

We need to understand our critical activity and the existence of these different components of critical psychology in relation to the nature of psychology as part of a broader apparatus of the 'psy complex' and psychological culture.

Psychological Culture

The twofold operation of the psy complex – as having ideological and material effects – leads us to a twofold task for radical research in and against the discipline of psychology. The first aspect of the task is that we should turn the analytic sceptical gaze around so that instead of allying with the psychologists, to study the people outside who are presumed to be the 'non-psychologists', we now conduct our research on the history and functions of psychology. The second aspect is that we study the everyday commonsensical resources that the psychologists themselves draw upon and then differentiate themselves from in order to confirm their own expertise. We study those resources also in order to challenge the way ideas and practices from psychology insinuate themselves into this culture, into what we conceptualise as 'psychological culture' (De Vos, 2012).

The material basis for psychological culture is in place now in contemporary US American and European society through a series of transformations in how people work, maintain themselves outside work and manage alienation (Mandel, 1974). This material basis is then reproduced through neoliberal globalisation to the rest of the world (Went, 2000). Let us take briefly these three components in turn.

First, there are significant changes in the organisation of production and consumption, and the service sector now becomes a site of production in which women are a key resource (Brook, 2009). More specifically, it is stereotypical 'femininity' that is the resource, and men are encouraged to draw upon that resource now as efficiently as women. Increasingly, managerial and commercial operations have thus been 'feminised', and this '*feminisation*', needless to say, idealises but does not

necessarily benefit women (Fraser, 2013). The requirement that staff in service industries should engage in what has been called ‘deep acting’, so that their commitment to the organisation persuades customers that it cares for all who come into contact with it, is one example of this feminisation (Hochschild, 1983).

Second, new forms of media intensify the demand that people should account for themselves. They are expected to do this in terms of their personal history and in terms of thoughts and feelings that may otherwise be secret, hidden, inside. The *confessional media* that have become more and more the staple diet of daytime television and women’s magazines build upon the research tradition in psychology that rested on ‘introspection’ (De Vos, 2013). The practice of ‘introspection’ underpins psychology, for it requires that expertise, expertise that is now sometimes called ‘personal skills’, be developed so that each individual may reflect on the causes of their actions as if they are psychological causes (Rose, 1996).

Third, there is the development of new ostensibly freer modes of self-presentation in which individuals imagine that they have been empowered to speak about themselves, but do so now in the restricted code of *therapeutic* self-management. It is here that a form of psychology that was for many years disparaged by psychologists returns to haunt it. But now these humanistic and more creative qualitative forms of psychology have flowered outside the discipline. Psychologists are therefore attempting to reconfigure their own discipline around more ‘positive’ goals in order to connect with and eventually re-colonise everyday psychology (McLaughlin, 2011). There is a tension between some forms of psychological culture and aspects of the discipline of psychology, but this should not lead us to opt for one as necessarily being more progressive than the other. They operate as twins, two sides of an ideological and materially effective process.

Psychologisation

One important consequence of these transformations is that the ‘intellectual labour’ that psychology prized itself on having expertise in managing is now, in turn, divided into two. On the one hand, there is the now rather dated ‘instrumental labour’, which is the set of mainly mechanical procedures for perception and ‘cognition’ (as psychologists prefer to term thinking). On the other hand, there is ‘emotional labour’, which those working in human resource divisions of large companies as well as in clinical and educational psychology departments prefer to focus on.

Notice that, as with the first artificial and alienating division between intellectual and manual labour, which caricatured and demeaned stereotypical ‘masculine’ activity, this new subdivision sets stereotypically masculine ‘instrumental’ forms of intellectual labour against what is assumed to be the more psychologically complex ‘emotional’ labour. The point here is not that one side of the division should be reclaimed, but that we should understand how this dividing practice operates and how it serves to reinforce a certain individualistic, essentialist and normalised ideal

image of femininity and it serves to encourage psychologisation in culture and in everyday experience. Psychologisation was essential for psychology to be able to borrow material from adjacent disciplines such as philosophy, biology and sociology and to rework that material as if it were psychological. The domain of 'psychology' as such is a fiction, there is no such thing as psychology; instead there is an intense elaborate process of psychologisation. Psychologisation therefore takes place in a number of ways that are problematic for those of us who aim to change the world and, crucially, know that another world is only possible if people are actively engaged in changing social conditions themselves (Parker, 2007).

First, psychologisation operates through the *reduction of horizons* in which certain issues are bracketed out either as unimportant or as things that is just not possible to have any impact on. This is not merely a technical problem that flows from the attempt to produce experimental studies of social phenomena in psychology; it is a problem that arises when individuals are encouraged to reflect on their disappointment and draw the moral that they are now all the more courageous to accept what cannot be changed.

Second, psychologisation works through the separation not only of each individual from others so that psychological solutions are independent of everyone else, but also through segregation of 'lifeworlds' (to use a psychological term popular in the phenomenological tradition in the discipline). This segregation promotes an *organicism* in which identity as a member of a group involves a focus on the identity as well as loyalty to communities that are themselves organised to maintain traditional power hierarchies. The motif of 'balance', as an ideal of cognitive well-being as well as an ideal relationship within and between 'communities', thus serves to maintain the status quo.

Third, psychologisation operates through an *experiential commitment* to psychological explanations, not only of what happens to each individual but also what happens to society. Then the language of psychology comes to replace other various political explanations, and this language limits the room for manoeuvre and, even more so, for social change.

Psychologisation thus reinforces each of the three key problems with mainstream research – individualism, essentialism and normalisation – and in this way leads us to think of cultural-historical critique as intrinsically separate from collective action (Reicher, 1982). This psychologisation is the antithesis of cultural-historical critique. We can take as one powerful instance of psychologisation the appeal to 'community' as one of the ruses of psychology. A simple appeal to community does not necessarily disentangle ourselves from the psy complex, psychological culture or processes of psychologisation. This is particularly important because 'community psychology' claims to be concerned with the question of cultural-historical critique (Kagan et al., 2011). By taking a critical psychological perspective we can see how the understanding community psychology has of 'communities' can actually work against cultural-historical critique. We can see this clearly if we examine the way that this psychologisation obscures our understanding of one of the subjective effects of having to live in capitalist society. That is 'alienation'.

Alienation

Alienation is commonly understood as a sense of ‘helplessness’ in psychology, as something individual (Stokols, 1975). But this is misleading, and we need to turn to more sophisticated theoretical cultural-historical accounts which challenge this individualisation of experience, which treat the problem as some ‘thing’ – a faulty cognition or developmental process – that is assumed to be an essence inside the person, or which pathologise those who experience alienation. The most radical accounts of alienation come from within the Marxist tradition and connect their description of this expression of distress and exploitation under capitalism with interventions to overthrow capitalism and thereby ameliorate, if not end, alienating life processes (Mandel & Novack, 1970). We need to conceptualise how alienation is the separation from one’s own creative labour and thus to understand how it entails a deeper separation between the impoverished sense of self and something which is then assumed to be lost (Kovel, 2007).

Alienation entails a separation of ‘self’ from ‘product’, and this separation thereby constitutes a division in the human subject under capitalism that also conjures into place romanticised ‘unities’ in which wholeness is invested. This is why Marxism attempts to grasp how our creative capacities are distorted under capitalism when we sell our labour time to others, determine the conditions in which we work and take the profit when they sell the fruits of our labours; this is part of a ‘humanist’ critique of a dehumanising and unjust political-economic system. However, Marxism also attempts to grasp how it is that we try to heal that alienation by invoking a simple individualist ‘humanist’ idea of the person as the real psychological individual that, we suppose, existed before alienation (Mandel & Novack, 1970).

Alienation thus operates in a number of complex ways, as a separation or division that pertains to at least three different dimensions: concerning the mind pitted against the body; concerning intellectual labour set against manual labour; and concerning instrumental labour which is contrasted with emotional labour.

This brings us back to psychologisation. There is a resulting ‘psychologisation’ of the phenomenon of alienation here, and this works in two ways. In psychologisation generally speaking, there is, first, psychologisation that is reduced in much psychology to the motifs of identity, self-control, rationality and feeling. A second aspect of psychologisation takes form as ‘sociologisation’ which is reduced by psychologists to the motif of ‘community’. These two aspects of psychologisation – concerning the individual and concerning the realm of the social – mirror each other in psychology, operating as ideologised understandings of ourselves and others, and they each function as ways of describing what feels to be ‘lost’ in alienation; ‘identity’ mirrors ‘community’ given fullness to both, to each from the other (Badiou, 2001).

The Psychologist

The process of psychologisation raises a question about the kinds of subjects who are most susceptible to psychological explanations. While the psychologist imagines that they merely conduct studies on others outside the discipline – the non-psychologists – they are the ones who are most deeply invested in psychology. There is a historical process here that is recapitulated in the training and career of each psychologist.

In a first step, the psychologist is the subject of research, the *agent* who describes their research in the first person. We have to remember that the earliest studies based on introspection in psychology required the subject to be a skilled experimenter themselves. In order to be able to accurately describe what they imagined to be their internal thought processes, the subject needed to be well-versed in psychological terminology. There was already a separation of this supposedly scientific research from the outside world, from outsiders. The first subject of psychological research was thus a psychologist, and their expertise in introspection confirmed them as such.

The second step, then, is when the psychologist starts to speak as the *cipher* of a system of impersonal statements; they signal their scientific neutrality by using the third-person form in which they too are reduced to the status of an object of hypotheses, theoretical models and explanations. This negation of any direct acknowledgement of their own interests and activity in bringing about their 'results' serves to alienate them from a process in which do, in fact, still have a degree of autonomy and power over others.

The third step is taken when psychology becomes seen as a source of knowledge, and it is now that the psychologist may speak in the second person, relaying their findings to others in the position of *enthusiast*.

Alternative 'Psychologies'

So let us turn back to the role of 'critical' approaches to psychology. The first lesson we can draw from this brief analysis of the discipline is that if we are to study psychology, if we are to focus on the discipline of psychology in critical research, then we must also watch what the 'critical psychologists' are doing. There have always been dissident groupings in the discipline that claimed to be doing something quite different from the mainstream, but that have still been implicated in it.

One option today is that of what I shall call '*counter-psychology*', by which I mean those approaches that aim to complement mainstream research. This requires a delicate balancing act in which the counter-psychologist aims to be the critical conscience of the discipline while also hoping to be recognised as a 'sub-discipline'. Here I would include the valuable work of the community psychologists who still speak the language of psychology in order to try and reform the discipline (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

Another option is to take a more rebellious stance, in the vantage point of '*anti-psychology*'. Here, as with 'anti-psychiatry' – which was a movement that was led mainly by psychiatrists remember – there is still the risk of complementing mainstream psychology, if only in a more immediately conflictual way. This is still an option that devotes itself to opposing bad psychology and thus may end up functioning as the mirror of what it opposes. Here I have in mind popular humanist and spiritualistic approaches to the individual that the discipline of psychology so dislikes, approaches that are waiting to embrace the anti-psychologist, who eventually may be ready to collapse exhausted by the struggle into an individualistic, essentialist and normative worldview that is just as bad as the one that they pitted themselves against (e.g. Wilber, 2001).

There is a third option, which is to construct forms of '*non-psychology*'. Our non-psychological activity will include building different alliances between academics, professionals and those who use psychology services. It will include using theoretical frameworks that antagonise the psychologists, noticing when ideas start to be absorbed and neutralised by the discipline. It will include elaborating specific rights for those subjected to psychology, whether they are outside or inside the discipline, so that their self-activity brings into question the limitations imposed by psychology. And it will include forming spaces in which alternatives to psychology may render the discipline into a specific historical practice that will one day become obsolete. I have in mind here an approach that runs parallel to attempts to develop forms of description that avoid repeating philosophical categories and, instead, see those attempts as 'non-philosophy' (Brassier, 2003). In psychology, however, we are dealing with a conceptual apparatus that is not only misleading, but profoundly unjust, and so our 'critical psychology' must include explicitly political elements if it is to connect with cultural-historical critique.

This third 'non-psychology' would therefore be a genuine anti-capitalist 'critical psychology' and comprise four interconnected elements, and these elements of critical psychology can be put to work to answer a deeper, even more pressing question than why there is critical psychology. The most important analytic task that faces critical psychologists who want to go beyond the historically limited frame of neoliberalism – a task that involves taking a position in relation to what we are analysing, a position that necessarily impels us to change what we analyse in the very process of understanding and explaining it – is: Why is there psychology (Canguilhem, 1958)? Why is there psychology as such as a domain of abstract intellectual activity that appears to us, to each of us one by one, as if it could be studied within this particular disciplinary frame and which would reveal to us the reasons for human action? These four elements of critical analysis could, perhaps, bring us closer to a Marxist approach to this object of study (Parker, 2009). This would facilitate the development of a 'critical psychology' that put cultural-historical critique at the centre of its work. This 'cultural-historical critique' would therefore move from an amelioration of problems that appear under capitalism to tackle the political-economic conditions which systematically structure and intensify alienation. It is anti-capitalist because it conceptualises psychology itself as part of the 'psy complex' that developed in tandem with the development of capitalism as an

apparatus for regulating 'individuals' and their 'communities', rendering them obedient as good workers and citizens. And it is specifically Marxist because it treats the symbolic architecture of psychology as a legitimating ideology for capitalism that will only disappear with the abolition of capitalism itself (Parker, 2007).

The first element of an anti-capitalist critical psychology would be a close analysis of the way dominant forms of psychology operate ideologically and in the service of power. Such analysis needs to focus not only on psychological 'models' but also on the methodologies it uses (Parker, 2005). This is where we get to the heart of the issue: the abstraction of the individual subject from social relations and the abstraction of the researcher. Psychology re-presents to us elements of our second nature under capitalism that psychologists imagine to be the real cause of our activity. This analysis would lead us to a political economy of psychology as itself operating within the wider circulation of commodities in capitalism (Newman & Holzman, 1993).

The second element of an anti-capitalist critical psychology would be the study of how alternative psychologies come to be historically constituted so that they confirm ideological representations of relations or subvert them. Here is a reminder that each and every framework we use is conditioned by the imperative of capitalism to open up new markets, and the ideological texture of this constantly mutating capitalism is composed of different contradictory reflections of the way commodities are produced and consumed (Gordo López & Parker, 1999). As we have seen in the case of neoliberalism, the study of alternative psychologies should include study of the political-economic conditions that bear them (Gordo López & Cleminson, 2004).

The third element of an anti-capitalist critical psychology would be the exploration of how psychological notions operate in everyday life to produce contemporary psychological culture. Alongside the historical theoretical analysis of psychology as a discipline, we need detailed cultural analysis of the way we reproduce capitalist social relations as if they were mental processes, and the attempt to connect with those processes provides the basis for the different varieties of popular psychological false consciousness (Gordo López, 2000). These are new forms of necessary false consciousness that accurately condense and reproduce certain conditions of 'mental' life (Sohn-Rethel, 1978).

The fourth element of an anti-capitalist critical psychology would include a searching out and reclaiming of the way practices of everyday life may form the basis of resistance to psychology (McLaughlin, 1996). The abstraction and circulation of commodities make it possible to engage in intellectual work, but they do not give us direct access to anything, which is why empiricism is such an ideological dead-end. It is collective practice that forms the basis of resistance, and some theoretical work is always necessary to make that resistance present to us and effective as part of collective revolutionary projects (Fozooni, 2011).

To accomplish the development of an anti-capitalist approach that tackles the question of cultural-historical critique, we need to connect critical psychology in different parts of the world and each tradition of work needs to examine how its critique is limited by the specific operations of capitalism, the psy complex and

psychologisation (e.g. Dafermos et al., 2006, 2013). Critical psychology cannot be 'universal', but our struggle and learning from each other is crucial if we are each to produce something different to the mainstream work in the discipline and to tackle structures of exploitation and oppression that structure our world today.

Note This chapter draws upon, reworks and expands my chapter 'Critical Psychology in Großbritannien', published in D. Heseler, R. Iltzsche, O. Rojon, J. Rüppel and T. D. Uhlig (Hrsg.) (2017) *Perpektiven kritischer Psychologie und qualitative Forschung: Zur Unberechenbarkeit des Subjekts* (pp. 33–50). Wiesbaden: Springer.

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Chapter 4
Looking Toward a Productive Dialogue Between Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychologies

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Abstract The chapter aims to transcend the gap that exists between theories that identify themselves as critical psychologies and those identified under the umbrella of cultural-historical psychology, including the many different labels introduced by Western psychology in relation to what this means. This gap does not contribute to advances in important topics that are simultaneously dealt with via different paths in both of these types of psychology. The vagueness intrinsic in both definitions has led to consider as critical psychology a wide range of approaches that clearly diverge from each other regarding some points, while cultural-historical psychology, having emerged as an attribute of different trends within Soviet psychology, has become unilaterally identified with one stage of Vygotsky's work in both Leontiev's activity theory group and Western psychology. Looking for points through which both definitions can open new ways for working together, transcending their current boundaries, in the chapter is also presented one path through which both critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology can find a starting point in order to work together in some important topics for advancing psychology to new problems that are far of being solved.

Introduction

Critical psychologies are, in fact, cultural, historical, and socially grounded psychologies (Holzkamp, 1991; Holzkamp, 2016; Holzkamp-Osterkamp, 1991; Martín Baro, 2006; Bleger, 1973, 1988; Burman, 2017, 2018; Teo, 1998, 2017; Parker, 1999). However, there are no standard sets of concepts to define what a critical psychology is. Many theories have been critical in some historical period, or in relation to other, more conservative, versions of psychology during the same

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historical moment, without expressing wider critical positions. In this chapter, critical psychologies are considered as those that have explicitly assumed themselves as such, a relatively recent tendency in psychology (Parker, 1999). The chapter aims to transcend the gap that exists between theories that identify themselves as critical psychologies and those identified under the umbrella of cultural-historical psychology, including the many different labels introduced by Western psychology in relation to what this means. This gap does not contribute to advances in important topics that are simultaneously dealt with via different paths in both of these types of psychology.

It is also important to point out the vagueness intrinsic in both definitions; critical psychology has been explicitly used by a wide range of approaches that clearly diverge from each other regarding some points, while cultural-historical psychology, having emerged as an attribute of different trends within Soviet psychology, has become unilaterally identified with one stage of Vygotsky's work in both Leontiev's Activity theory group and Western psychology.

Within the wider picture of critical psychologies, this chapter focuses on three positions that, in the 1960s and in the 1980s, made interesting critical contributions, which remained relatively overlooked in world psychology until today: (1) German critical psychology, (2) the critical movement within Argentinian psychoanalysis, and (3) Latin American critical social psychology. Cultural-historical psychology, as a general attribute shared by the main 'schools' that were integrated within Soviet psychology,[1] will also be discussed. Soviet psychology represented a critical moment in relation to the dominant psychology of that time, despite the various coincidences between some of its representatives and the dominant American behavioral representation of psychology (see Chap. 10).

Soviet psychology was critical in relation to the mainstream behavioral-empiricist psychology of the 1930s, mainly through the articulation of consciousness and activity, as proposed by Rubinstein, and through Vygotsky's contributions in "The Psychology of Art" and in his later works (González Rey, 2011, 2014, 2016b). After the first generation of Soviet psychologists, whose critiques were mainly theoretical, their disciples, who formed a new generation, advanced a philosophical and methodological critique through authors like Bozhovich (1968), Miasichev (1960), and Abuljanova (1973, 1980). Bozhovich's and Miasichev's works were the first attempts at criticism of Soviet institutions within that psychology – the former in her critique addressing education and the latter with his critique of health and institutional functioning in Soviet society.

The omission of a social agenda in Soviet psychology led to the apparent paradox of it being an individual psychology, despite its main principle being centered on the recognition of the cultural-historical genesis and development of

[1] Apart from the differences between its different schools, Soviet psychology was the term around which all the schools and authors that coexisted in that psychology found their identity, even when the dominant official version within Soviet psychology preserved its own identifications, such as reflexology, reactology, and activity theory.

the human psyche. The only exception in that orientation was the 'Leningrad School', in which an orientation toward social psychology has historically prevailed.

As a result of the little reciprocal knowledge between critical and cultural-historical psychologies, and despite their important coincidences, we have decided to focus on the following topics in this chapter:

Firstly, we give a critical analysis of cultural-historical psychology as the term has been used to define only one stage of Vygotsky's work. Secondly, we present a brief overview of German critical psychology and the critical Latin American movements both within Argentinian psychoanalysis in the 1960s and critical social psychology in the 1980s, highlighting some points of contact between them, as well as the paths that have remained open due to their legacy.

Thirdly, we aim to advance in terms of the concepts from the aforementioned critical psychologies and from cultural-historical psychology, through which it would be possible to advance a new theory of subjectivity capable of transcending the ontological monopoly of language and discourse which, at some point, has been considered as the only way to construct a critical psychology.

A Brief Critical Outline of the Concept of Cultural-Historical Psychology

Cultural-historical psychology was a term introduced in Russian and Western psychological literature decades after Vygotsky's death and was used to characterize Vygotsky's work between 1927 and 1931 (Keiler, 2012). The term has been widely questioned by different authors (González Rey, 2011, 2014, 2017a; Leontiev, 1992; Yasnitsky, 2012, among others). The use of this label has become even more controversial since the North American invention of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). This integration of Vygotsky's and Leontiev's approaches is unsustainable due to historical, political, and theoretical reasons and is widely criticized in psychology and education (Gonzalez Rey, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017a; Koshmanova, 2007; Miller, 2011; Yasnitsky, 2009, 2012; Zavershneva, 2010, 2016; Zinchenko, 1993, 2009).

Many terms have been used within Anglophone psychology, aiming to equate Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria as representative of the same psychological "school," among which are cultural psychology, sociocultural psychology, and cultural-historical activity theory. All of these have omitted the contexts, moments, and contradictions that characterized Soviet psychology as a whole. On behalf of a cultural-historical activity psychology, the history and the sociopolitical contexts in which the work of those authors took place were completely omitted (Bogdanshikov, 2008; González Rey, 2014; Vassilieva, 2010). After the term "Soviet psychology" was used by Cole in some of his books (1976) and as the title of the journal he created in the 1970s, named *Soviet Psychology*, the term has never again appeared in

Western psychology. Instead of Soviet psychology, the "troika," Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria began to be quoted as representative of Russian psychology.

Only a few versions of the history of Soviet psychology, mainly written during the Soviet period, have remained available for decades, some of which have never been translated into English. All of these facts, to some extent, have also been responsible for the lack of attention given to the history of Soviet psychology. This historical gap has also had to contend with the "Vygotsky boom" in the West before his selected works were published in Russian.

Fortunately, the task of advancing new versions of that history has been taken up in Western psychology since the 1990s through authors mentioned above. In Russia, important new publications devoted to historical matters in Soviet psychology also began to appear in the 1990s (Bostmanova, Guseva & Ravich-Scherbo, 1994).

When the history of any institutionalized human reality is omitted, it is replaced by myths and ahistorical narratives that are constructed on the basis of theoretical lenses that have little to do with that history, as was the case with Soviet psychology within Anglophone psychology. Authors such as Miasichev, Ananiev, Bozhovich, Rubinstein, Abuljanova, and Ponomariov, among many others, have remained practically unknown in Western psychology until very recent years, and many of them continue to be unknown today.

A Short Overview of the Critical Latin American Psychologies and German Critical Psychology

As Teo noted, "Western psychologists believe that their theories are better than theories from the periphery. In addition, it would be an act of fantasy to imagine that the subjectivity of the Other operates in the same way as Western subjectivity" (Teo, 2017, p. 286). In fact, hegemonic positions do not always result from authors' conscious intentions, but from the fact that their subjectivity is configured in such a way that it appears to be a "universal subjectivity." Most Western psychologists have remained confined within a representation of subjectivity as a purely individual phenomenon referred to as an intrapsychical structure of the human mind. This representation is not able to theoretically encompass how a dominant social subjectivity is configuring their positions beyond their good political intentions.

Founded and promoted by Holzkamp in the 1960s, German critical psychology was continued by a group of followers with a growing impact on Western psychology, such as Dreier (2016), Tolman (1991), and Teo (1998), among others. On the other hand, the critical Latin American movements, such as Argentinian psychoanalysis and critical social psychology, have not found a consistent continuation in Latin American psychology.

Argentinian psychoanalysis and German critical psychology appeared at the same time, in the late 1960s and 1970s. Neither of them represented a consistent and coherent system of knowledge. German critical psychology, due to its longer dura-

tion, advanced through different periods a consistent theoretical proposal (Teo, 1998). The short existence and discontinuity of the two most important Latin American critical movements resulted from different facts, among them the political violence that characterized the region between the 1960s and 1990s and which played an important role. Besides this fact, the colonized positions that have historically characterized intellectuals in the region have also influenced the discontinuity of such positions. As Perez stressed:

> … the philosophical trends coming from Europe and North America, whatever they were, Derridian deconstruction, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism or Postcolonialism, become temporal fashions, not because they have not a philosophical value in themselves, but because the immaturity of Latin American intellectuals, in particular the academics who transformed them into fashions, taking from them the most strident ideas, their vocabularies, of which they can make fast and temporary use while they prepare for the next ideas which will replace these ones. (Pérez, 1999, p. 203)

Some important points of convergence can be found between German critical psychology and the Latin American critical movements. Firstly, both were interested in advancing a new psychological theory capable of simultaneously advancing theoretical, epistemological, and practical changes. Secondly, both represented cultural, social, and historically located psychologies; however, neither accepted social determinism. Finally, both were explicitly interested in the topic of subjectivity, which is closely related to the comprehension of individuals as active and transformative agents.

Bleger creatively criticized the prevailing positions in Argentinian psychoanalysis of that time: "The personal and human facts are replaced by true mythical entities… We appear as the incarnation of these entities as a result of which the word is viewed as the externalization of the movement of such entities" (Bleger, 1988, pp. 92–93 – our translation from Spanish). Bleger criticized the split made by Freud between the drama of life and universal human driving forces. He was conscious of the importance of advancing a conception of subjectivity that emerges within social life: "Psychology was delimited as the study of the subjective side of human experience" (Bleger, 1988, pp. 110–111).

Holzkamp, like Bleger, was strongly influenced by Marxism. However, both of them were critical of the social determinism that prevailed in both European Marxist circles and in Soviet psychology. In Holzkamp's words:

> As many futile attempts (the author refers to the attempts to advance on human nature departing from Marxism) have shown that progress in this direction cannot be made by starting with the Marxist "anatomy of bourgeois society" and expecting to arrive at a conception of the individual from the dissection and specification of the mode of production in particular capitalistic societies. No matter how precise and detailed such an analysis may be, the "individuals as such" remain somehow out of reach. (Holzkamp, 1991, p. 51)

Martín Baró, who was influenced by sociologists like Parsons, Fals Borda, and Berger and Luckman, as well as by Marx and Foucault, also stressed the relevance of individuals and subjectivity for a critical social psychology.

> Political psychology intends a reconstruction of a psychology bringing the human being back to the society and to its history, i.e. recovering its personal and social existence. …The human being is an objective reality within a society and, therefore, object and subject of its

> circumstances… But it is also a subjective reality, creator of its own perspective and activity and, as such, producer of a personal history and of an emotional experience. (Martín Baró, 1991, p. 47)

Social changes demand the emergence of subjects capable of generating social subjective movements, whose emergence always implies social subjective productions capable of transcending the immediate dominant objective conditions. These social subjective processes are part of what has been defined as social subjectivity (Gonzalez Rey, 1993, 2002, 2005, 2015). The emergence of social subjects always demands the emergence of individual ones. The compromise with social change was particularly remarked upon by the two Latin American critical movements. Bleger submitted to serious criticism the psychological professional practices of Latin American psychologists:

> The chances of working in a political sense with the arms given by science could find an important avenue in the extension of the work of psychoanalysts and psychologists as assessors not only in enterprises such as school, as had been done for a long time, but also in political organizations and social movements. (Bleger, 1973, p. 516)

The Argentinian theoretical critical movement headed by Bleger led to a rupture within the Argentinian Psychoanalytic Association, APA. A group of leftist psychoanalysts left the association and constructed a movement known as "To Question." Its political orientation was clear in Langer's preface: "In synthesis psychoanalytic interpretation can complement our sociological and political understanding, but it loses completely its meaning if, instead, we assume it in an isolated way without integrating its practices and knowledge as part of the social structures that Marx made intelligible" (Langer, 1971, p. 20).

The critical social psychology that emerged in the mid-1980s has been mainly known outside Latin America by who was, from our point of view, its main figure – Martín Baró[2] – with his proposal of a "liberation psychology." However, it was a collective movement inspired by a Latin American vanguard, which looked for a social psychology capable of answering the social and political problems of the region. The XXth Interamerican Congress of Psychology, held in Caracas in 1985, was the departure point of this movement, whose informal organization advanced through different meetings and projects that were sponsored by the Central University of Venezuela and the Institute of Psychology of that university, through José M. Salazar and M. Montero as its main supporters.

Unlike the Argentinian movement, this social psychology integrated psychologists from many Latin American countries. Martín Baró was aware of the need to theoretically and epistemologically transform psychology in order for it to become a device for social action: "The dominant epistemological models of doing psychology departed from several premises that are rarely discussed, and to which, with even less frequency, alternatives are proposed" (Martín Baró, 2006, p. 9). In spite of

[2] Ignacio Martín Baró was a Spanish Jesuit and resident of El Salvador, where he was a professor at the "José Simeón Cañas" University. During the armed conflict that engulfed the country in the 1980s and the early 1990s, he was killed by the Salvadorian army (in 1989).

his political commitment, Martín Baró rejected political verbosity: "...something dangerous is to try to cover political superficiality with political slogans or critical analysis with ideological dogmas" (Martín Baró & Dobles, 1986, p. 73).

German critical psychology emerged as an academic movement, having a long life. Both facts allow its advance on a new psychological theoretical system to be explained. According to Teo, "Holzkamp personifies the German conceptual, foundational and systematic tradition, as do Kant, Hegel and Marx" (Teo, 1998, p. 235).

Despite Holzkamp's explicit recognition of subjectivity, he in fact remained imprisoned within the traditional taxonomy of concepts used by psychology for the study of individuals, such as volition, cognitive processes, motivation, and others of this kind (González Rey, 2017b, 2018). This narrow position in relation to subjectivity clearly appeared as follows:

> Whereas an adequate theoretical reconstruction of the connections between cognition, emotions, and action requires that we take negative emotional subjective states seriously as expressions of the unsatisfactoriness of objective living conditions, and emotionality must therefore be seen as serving as a subjective guide for the improvement of environmental relations. (Holzkamp-Osterkamp, 1991, p. 123)

In our opinion, his main contribution for the development of a cultural-historical theory of subjectivity was his work related to the concept of the "conduct of everyday life" (Holzkamp, 2016). Regarding this concept, he stated:

> Viewing the "conduct of life" as an active integrative (or, as it is occasionally put even more pointedly, constructive) activity of the subject, the group[3] critically distanced itself from established sociological models of thought in which individuals are always seen as merely a dependent variable of the societal structure or the like. (Holzkamp, 2016, p. 70)

Holzkamp's argument made evident his openness to sociological discussion and how his own positions were influenced by discussions that were occurring within German sociological movements in the 1960s, for which individuals were active agents inseparable from social dynamics.

Holzkamp creatively used his experience as a professor to advance the concept of the "conduct of everyday life." He made explicit how one student's world could not be reduced to the classical binomial formula "conditions of learning – student's personal willingness to learn." He expressed a wider representation of what it means to be socially located here and now in the classroom, as follows: "Once I have realized that students' learning activities may be linked to how they conduct their lives on a daily basis, I could connect this with certain chance observations that I was able to make of what one might call 'full-fledged' academic workers at the university" (Holzkamp, 2016, p. 66). In fact, Holzkamp opened a new path toward understanding social realities as the multiple presences of several dynamics that simultaneously occur in our individual lives and that are subjectively inseparable from any actual individual performance. Holzkamp, however, could not advance a representation of subjectivity capable of expressing the transition from this set of simultane-

[3] The group to which Holzkamp is referring is the sociological group of Munich, which was the inspiration for his concept.

ous social events to one subjective unit capable of simultaneously expressing these events as part of a new ontological subjective order.

Nevertheless, the concept of the "conduct of everyday life" did not pass unperceived by the important group of researchers organized around Holzkamp's legacy. Advancing with respect to this concept, Dreier has stated:

> The foundation for the formation of subjectivity and experience is her everyday life and not a situation. This insight expands our analytic gaze from an immediate situation to an everyday life that is going on from day to day in a subjectively and socially grounded and arranged way. Furthermore, everyday life contains many different situations in different places and spheres of activity. So it is not adequate to analyze a subject's situation in the singular in general terms. Situations must be grasped in the plural as different across the diverse contexts of a subject's everyday life. (Dreier, 2016, p. 17)

Dreier has precisely extended the most important unfolding of the concept, its value for representing social life as an everyday process that "is going on from day to day in a subjectively and socially grounded and arranged way." Despite these solid advances, Holzkamp did not achieve his last purpose of advancing a science of the subject, a proposal that, from our point of view, is inseparable from a new theory of subjectivity.

The Reformulation of the Topic of Subjectivity, Its Relevance for Advancing the Cultural-Historical and the Critical Psychological Legacies

Subjectivity in our proposal is a subversive concept, because its definition allows the theoretical explanation of how resistance to, and confrontation with, the social hegemonic order has historically emerged, opening a theoretical pathway to explain this resistance. At the same time, subjective phenomena are intrinsically polychromatic inside one culture, making impossible any attempt to standardize subjectivity or to submit it to control. Change and development are intrinsic to subjectivity, so any form of resistance is engendered from inside one structure of power, within new subjective productions that may lead to nonpredictable changes and consequences, transcending the dominant established rationality. Subjectivity from this cultural–historical standpoint is not anchored in ahistorical truths and cannot be reduced to one discipline; it is a theoretical construction related to all human phenomena, whether social or individual (González Rey, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017a, 2017b).

One of the requirements for advancing the topic of subjectivity in social sciences is to separate the topic from old concepts that make it difficult to advance a new theoretical construction. These old concepts may have important premises in the history of philosophical and psychological thought (González Rey, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; González Rey & Mitjáns Marínez, 2017a, 2017b), but demand new theoretical, epistemological, and methodological advances. Such advances are impossible

to explain by the different concepts through which subjectivity has partially, and frequently indirectly, appeared in psychology and in some philosophical trends, such as the unconscious, alienation, intersubjectivity, the intrapsychical, consciousness, and so on. As a matter of fact, all of these concepts are referred to individuals. Subjectivity is not simply one more concept, but a definition of a new ontological realm related to human phenomena.

In psychology, theories have been advanced mainly through new theoretical concepts and representations, without specifying the ontological definition to which these concepts respond and without clearly addressing the following questions: (a) which epistemological challenges demand the introduction of these concepts? (b) how do these challenges take a particular methodological expression? (c) what philosophical dialogues are being opened up? and (d) how can these closely interrelated levels of knowledge production lead to new practices, research, and dialogues with other theories? We are attempting in our proposal to simultaneously advance with regard to all of these questions.

The recent dialogue with Fleer and Veresov, which included our research teams on emotions, imagination, perezhivanie, and subjectivity within cultural-historical psychology, has highlighted the need to advance Vygotsky's legacy, opening up new theoretical, epistemological, and methodological paths along which new research programs and professional practices are advancing (Fleer & González Rey, 2017; Adams & Fleer, 2017; Fleer, González Rey, & Veresov, 2017; González Rey, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; González Rey, Mitjáns Martínez, Rossato, & Goulart, 2017; Goulart & González Rey, 2016).

Our focus over the last 20 years has been to advance a theory of subjectivity from a cultural-historical standpoint. In Soviet psychology, the discussions about the omission of subjectivity began in the 1970s (Abuljanova, 1973, 1980; Chudnovsky, 1988). The absence of the very closely interrelated topics of subjectivity, sociality, and symbolical human realities influences the absence in both Soviet psychology and its many manifestations in Western psychology of topics like mental health, race, gender, age, institutions, and many others advanced by critical psychology, mainly from social constructionist and other discursive psychologies. These matters are discussed in our proposal on subjectivity, not as merely discursive-linguistic issues, but as subjective productions, whether in individuals or social instances (González Rey, 2002, 2005, 2011, 2015, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017b; Mitjáns Martínez & González Rey, 2017; Goulart, 2017; Goulart & González Rey, 2016; González Rey & Moncayo, 2018).

Subjectivity, as proposed in this chapter, is ontologically defined by a new qualitative human phenomenon that emerges as a result of the unity between symbolical processes and emotions, forming dynamic qualitative units of different complexity – subjective senses and subjective configurations. These closely interweave with each other, making up a system whose main characteristic is the constant interweaving of social and individual dynamics, reciprocally configured in the subjective productions of both levels, leading to the closely interrelated concepts of social and individual subjectivities (González Rey, 2015, 2016a, 2017b; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2016, 2017b). In this definition of subjectivity, emotions do not appear as

epiphenomena of linguistic and discursive processes, but as subjective productions that do not necessarily imply linguistic means.

Our proposal on subjectivity does not pretend to replace language or discourse. On the contrary, it aims to understand them as subjective productions, intending to avoid linguistic-discursive reductionism (Aranguren, 2017; González Rey, 2002, 2005, 2015, 2017b; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017b). At the same time, it is not our intention to exhaust language and discourse by their subjective character. The definition of discourse, understood as practice (Foucault, 1972), represented an important theoretical step in overcoming the naturalization of the human psyche, which is an extremely vague term that could never be completely assumed to explain specific human phenomena that are impossible to restrict to what has historically been understood under the concept of "psyche." Each psychological theory has identified the term according to its own subject matter, whether this is traces, behavior, the unconscious, psychological functions, motives, or whatever the concrete studied topic happened to be, ignoring discussions of what the term "human psyche" really means and which phenomena are embraced by the term.

The concept of discourse carries a cultural-historical character, since it represents a symbolical system of interrelated practices whose symbolic consequences are beyond the consciousness of the agents engaged in these practices. Discourse cannot only be treated in linguistic terms. Symbolical processes emerge in communicative actions within which the partners in communication are subjectively engaged. Symbolical realities have many expressions. The symbolical character of most human processes and realities is inseparable from emotions; the emergence of such unit whether in individuals or social interactive spaces defines subjective processes.

The fact that symbolical processes and emotions turn into one and the same process through communicative actions is what has led us to specify this as the ontological definition of subjectivity. When a student feels ashamed in a classroom as a result of a teacher's comment, his/her ashamed state is not caused by that comment in itself. This reaction is subjectively configured through subjective senses that are related to the way she/he has experienced prior and current moments of his/her life in different situations and contexts. Social symbolic constructions, such as race, gender, social status, physical appearance, and many others, could be sources of subjective senses that become subjectively configured in the simplest individual behaviors. Subjective configurations make any human experience a mix of reality and fiction, because what the student has experienced as subjective production is as objective as the rest of the facts within which his/her behavior has been engendered. This conclusion is very hard to accept due to the mixture of rationalism, materialism, and intellectualism that is still dominant in the imagination of the social sciences.

Our proposal on subjectivity is organized through concepts closely assembled as a configurational system.[4] Subjective senses, subjective configurations, and social

[4] This concept is used to define a system formed by subjective configurations in movement. This movement defines the very nature of the system as open to its own action. Subjective configurations are the epicenter around which the system is organized in its different paths of development,

and individual subjectivity, as well as agents and subjects, are so closely interrelated in such a way that persistent changes in any of them always impact the others, defining changes in the configurations within which they are generated in both social and individual subjectivity. A very strong point raised by this definition of subjectivity is an understanding of emotions in their symbolical function, inseparable from subjective states that are not identifiable through words or linguistic resources.

Subjective senses exist in an endless movement through which the cosmos of social symbolical constructions appears forming different subjective configurations that in turn become further complex self-generative units, capable of generating subjective senses. These processes appear simultaneously in both individuals and social instances. In the nonregular chains in which subjective senses appear, one sense is integrated into others, a reason why subjective senses are impossible to grasp as isolated entities; they have to be deciphered through intellectual interpretations and constructions. Subjective senses can simultaneously be integrated/generated by different subjective configurations in different experiences, having different consequences, and being experienced in different forms within these experiences. This movement always includes individuals as agents or subjects, their decisions and behaviors being sources of subjective senses that are inseparable from the subjective configuration of any human action. The ongoing course of this subjective movement is never defined by individual decisions or behavior, but these are inseparable from the subjective configurations in process.

Discourse as practice involves individuals and groups, in such a way that their actions become subjectively configured as part of the nature of discourse itself. Subjective processes and formations integrate discourse as subjective singular productions of its agents and subjects. Instead of the subject of discourse being omitted, as proposed by social constructionism, the subject is inseparable from the subjective character of discursive practices.

The fact that Marxism is part of the theoretical imaginary of the two psychologies we are attempting to approach in this chapter may have, to some extent, influenced the fact that subjectivity does not appear as a new ontological definition of human phenomena in either of them. The recognition of a human capacity as capable of transcending objective realities, instead of being produced within them, has never been completely assumed within the Marxist imaginary. Marx oscillated widely in relation to human subjectivity, and the ghost of socioeconomical determinism always overflowed the Marxist imaginary (González Rey, 2018). Even Eagleton, one of the most creative and nondogmatic Marxist authors in contemporary philosophy, stated in this regard:

> A number of key Marxist concepts – fetishism, reification, alienation, and commodification – mark a problem in this area. In a curious disturbance in the relations between matters and spirit, fetishism, phantasm and abstraction are in Marx's view built into the structure of

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implying the highly flexible, dynamic, and open character of the system. The system is never a whole that flows over individuals and social dynamics, nor a whole located behind its current configurations in process.

> social reality, and can come to exert an uncanny power over it. We are dealing here with efficacious illusions, not idle fancies. (Eagleton, 2017, p. 64)

Eagleton's effort to discriminate efficacious illusions from idle fancies is a good example of his incomprehension of what subjectivity means as an ontological definition. The constant interweaving of subjective senses and subjective configurations captures how a single individual is socially engaged in any performance, feeling him−/herself not only as an engineer, student, or whatever role according to the demands of the performance. Social subjective organized spaces function in the same way: the path taken by a conversation in an institution is configured by multiple subjective senses that deal with different institutional relationships, power groups, and the social positions of the employees in conversation, as well as by their singular subjective histories.

Departing from this definition of subjectivity, there is no set of objective processes and facts that could be taken as determinants of subjective productions, whether social or individual. Subjectivity expresses the human capacity to transcend what is objectively dominant, making individuals, groups, and social instances capable of creating new realities and processes that in the beginning could have seemed idle fantasies. Subjective configurations are not restricted to individuals, or to relations taken separately; subjective configurations generate and integrate in one subjective cosmos individuals and groups within active communicative actions embedded in the social networks within which social processes and individual actions continuously complement each other in a contradictory movement within which they advance by different paths.

In fact, this proposal on subjectivity implies profound changes in the way the Other in human practices is considered. This different way of understanding the Other, on the basis of the subjective configuration of the social relation within which he/she is involved, rather than by behaviors in themselves, opens a new path for all the human activities oriented toward the Other's subjective development. In our research program, we have been advancing on these theoretical and epistemological bases new research in education and health, in which research and professional practice advance as one and the same process (González Rey, 2011; González Rey et al., 2017; Goulart, 2017; Goulart & González Rey, 2016). Communicative actions are frequently generated by casual and spontaneous situations that have nothing to do either with the intentions of their protagonists or with local events that apparently generate the situation. They emerge as subjective productions of those individuals involved in this casual situation.

In political, scientific, educational, or any other human practices, communication is one of the main devices for promoting subjective development. However, the subjective configuration of communication, whether dialogical or not, implies different subjective configurations of the participants, whose differences and contradictions are inseparable from the preservation of the dialogue as such. The sensitivity of individuals to keeping themselves in dialogue is not based on rational arguments, but on subjective senses that emerge during the process, making common understanding a subjective production rather than a rational result. Rationality

in human relations is in fact an unpredictable and uncontrollable subjective production.

Jones (2007) identified very well the living character of communicative actions:

> Words do not produce or interpret themselves; people engaged over some matter, are responsible for that, and under certain circumstances, answerable too. What is said and how it is taken are facts about the conscious conduct of particular individuals within particular engagements. If a child responds with a furious tantrum to a critical word from mum but then takes (as it seems to mum) 'the same thing' quietly and calmly from dad, this may mean that, if only in the child's eyes, there are different matters at stake in the conduct of the different parents towards her. *What 'the same thing' is in communicative terms is something that only the parties to the engagement can determine,* since it is their behavior – the behavior of particular personalities towards one another – that is communication. (Jones, 2007, p. 5)

The life given by the author to the communicative act as it occurs in the simple snapshot of everyday life is compatible with our arguments. Jones defines the communicative act as a complex network of nonlinguistic processes that simultaneously and singularly involve the participants within a communicative act. A child's simple and objective behavior in reaction to the same simple request formulated by each parent becomes an important element in judging the child's different subjective configurations related to each parent. This example is a good expression of how a sequence of behaviors configured within a communicative relation would depend on something other than linguistic expressions and objective facts. What could seem a fiction is the reality that moves that communicative act; human realities cannot be detached from their fictional character. However, most psychological practices have omitted the subjective-communicative side of human behavior.

Subjectively based practices presuppose abandoning the place of the truth not only in its epistemological connotation, but also in its political and cultural meanings. In our transit through critical psychology, terms such as decolonization, liberation, and emancipation are frequently used. These terms carry a strong subjective connotation, because they are relevant as subjectively experienced processes whose emancipatory, decolonized, or liberatory character is not given by the direct and conscious intention of the protagonists. The recognition of cultural realities, in fact, implies recognizing the subjective fictions embodied in those cultural realities. The omission of this fact was the basis of the split between "civilized" and "barbarian" cultures made by all forms of colonialism.

How many "barbarian" practices have historically been part of Western development and continue to be part of it up until today? Due to this fact, the efforts of some critical social scientists are very important in advancing representations that emerge within other cultures (Burman, 2017, 2018; Connell, 2014; Teo, 2017).

Colonizing actions are not always related to colonizing intentions. From our point of view, colonizing actions are those imposed by one culture on another on behalf of a supposed superior rationality that the dominant culture is convinced that it possesses. Our comprehension of cultural practices, on the basis of our definition of subjectivity, makes it possible to establish a difference between subjectively oriented practices and practices understood as professional interventions. The latter are

based on an agenda of power that contains an a priori "true path" to be followed, omitting what emerges spontaneously and unpredictably during the communication with the Other. On the other hand, in subjectively based professional practice, the driving forces of change emerge from the dialogue between the participants. The absence of the topic of subjectivity from social, political, and philosophical analysis has frequently led to the fantasy of the adequacy of political campaigns on the basis of their explicit contents, overlooking the fact that any political campaign is subjectively configured within a dominant social subjectivity that is beyond the consciousness of its protagonists.

A current example of this is the important campaign oriented toward gender equality and gender diversity, which has sometimes led to some radical positions that, rather than being related to the main goals, are related to the social subjectivity within which this campaign has emerged.

Having agreed that gender is a social construction with political and social consequences that result from the historical patriarchal hegemony and that this is still dominant in our societies, gender is not only a social construction. Men and women are not only socially constructed; they embody important biological differences given by the differences between the sexes. Sexual differences do not determine gendered social constructions, but gendered social constructions also do not nullify sexual differences. Both of these dimensions enter into new qualitative relations capable of taking new expressions that are beyond any one-sided determinism. These two conditions, social constructions and bodies, are actively involved in life histories within which gender is subjectively produced within a wide range of differences.

Any attempt to define universals in such a complex matter would imply determinism of some kind, either social or biological. Our proposal of subjectivity takes another path; sex and gender are singularly and subjectively configured, leading to practices that exclude the unilateral positions that have been promoted by different political movements related to this matter.

Based on our proposal of subjectivity, sex and gender are always subjectively configured in two closely interrelated levels, i.e. social and individual subjectivity. Different sexual and gender expressions have been highly repressed, in all their forms, including male–female sexual practices that do not follow the normative institutional criterion (González Rey & Moncayo, 2018).

Cultural processes related to female–male complementary games, complicities, seductions, and inspirations cannot be reduced to a binary view related to historical gender violence; they are a part of all cultures. For instance, in Latin American cultures, the enchantment of binary sexual attraction, the creative way used by males and females to be attractive to each other, is part of the warm, expressive, and spontaneous expressions of human relationships. That does not mean that other forms of sexual and erotic expressions are not as legitimate. However, these expressions of male–female gender are part of a social subjectivity centered on human contact, on the openness of social relationships, on very expressive, authentic, and spontaneous relationships, within a culture of physical and psychological contacts in which people feel close to each other.

On behalf of the just struggle against patriarchal ideology, beautiful human experiences and living options based on female–male differences cannot be simply banned by a supposed universally progressive political position. In doing this, we are taking the risk of turning a just campaign into a new and obsessive form of colonialism.

The underestimation of the biological dimension of sex as part of the subjective and social configuration of gender, reducing gender to a purely social-ideological construction, is as reductionist as the comprehension of other human realities and facts when defined as mere discursive productions. From this theoretical framework on subjectivity, there has been no room to discuss social construction outside of the dominant social subjective configurations that characterize a broader social functioning. A growing and depersonalizing technological capitalism is a source of insane human relations, characterized by a growing individualism, solipsism, lack of social skills and spontaneity in human contacts, and incapacity for intimate contacts with others, processes that are inseparable from how sex and gender have been considered in the dominant Western societies.

The cultural-historical character of human subjectivity implies a high degree of cultural diversity that is an important fact to be considered in any possible future dialogue that, in our opinion, must take place in order to advance toward a critical cultural-historical psychology. Without considering the mosaic of different subjective paths that characterize human existence, emancipatory practices of any kind are impossible.

Some Final Conclusions

Critical psychologies integrate different theories addressed toward finding alternatives to the dominant psychological theories centered on a narrow, mainly individual and empirical, representation of the human psyche. Mainstream psychology continues to be centered on the close relation between diagnosis, control, and behavioral prediction, maintaining the gap between applied and fundamental psychology. In their effort to transcend this neutral and apolitical psychology, critical psychologies have engaged politically with the social realities within which they have emerged, attempting to advance in different ways new social and professional practices. However, in some cases, this intention has neglected individuals and social agents, as well as subjectivity.

Cultural-historical psychology has represented another scientific line with its specific paths of institutionalization and its own theoretical interests and topics. As discussed above, the term cultural-historical psychology appeared as a Western invention. In our understanding, its future progress along new critical paths demands a deep historical critical revision and an advance along new paths capable of taking its legacy forward.

The absence of the topic of the symbolic in Soviet philosophy, and consequently in Soviet psychology, aside from the political and ideological pressures exerted on

it by the Soviet state and from inside its own psychological institutions, did not allow the development of social psychology, and as a consequence, a critical social agenda was not a part of Soviet psychology.

The recovery of subjectivity, the subject, and individuals as inseparable from the network of processes that characterize social movements and transformations was theoretically recognized by the theories discussed in this chapter. Nonetheless, they could not advance in relation to subjectivity as a new ontological human reality that cannot be reduced to individual human minds. The definition of subjectivity as a new ontological definition of human phenomena, whether social or individual, is an innovation of the proposal advanced in this paper and one that could open up an interesting avenue for future dialogue between these two psychologies, from which a critical cultural-historical psychology could be developed.

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Chapter 5
The Primacy of Critical Theory and the Relevance of the Psychological Humanities

Thomas Teo

Abstract Critical psychologies and cultural-historical approaches in psychology have common sources but have become separated in their historical trajectories. These divergent paths allow for mutual critiques and possible reconciliations. In this paper, differences and similarities are discussed, beginning with the role of critique, the society-individual nexus, the historicity of knowledge, and the ethical-political worldviews that engender these research programs. It is argued that *critical theory*, an umbrella term that encompasses both, requires theory development in order to do justice to the appearance of contemporary human mental life. This theory must be based on existing traditions as well as on intellectual innovations that have occurred in the humanities, the arts, and the concept-driven social sciences - in short, in the psychological humanities. Advancing and developing a critical theory of the psyche or theorizing that incorporates both programs as well as the psychological humanities cannot be confined to one particular methodology or a single framework, but should be diverse and pluralistic and move beyond methodologies and grand thinkers to psychosocial problems that people encounter in their daily lives.

Problem

I understand critical psychologies and cultural-historical approaches as frameworks within the larger project of *critical theory*. By *critical psychologies* I do not mean a specific approach, such as German *Kritische Psychologie* (Holzkamp, 1983), but the varieties of critical reflections as they have emerged in the twentieth and continue into the twenty-first century in psychology (Teo, 2015a). The term *cultural-historical approaches* refers to research and practices in the tradition of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), activity theory based on Aleksei Leontiev's (1903–1979)

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works, more recent research by Cole and Engeström (1997) (representing cultural-historical activity theory; CHAT), and the works of neo-Vygotskians such as Roth (2016) or Stetsenko (2016), to name only a very few participants in this highly productive tradition. Due to the varieties of critical psychologies and cultural-historical approaches, it is impossible to talk about them as representing a single framework, and discussed in this argument are general tendencies, rather than a specific individual. It should be mentioned that the former has less clearly articulated theoretical principles than the latter.

While the *Frankfurt School* in its core was developing an interdisciplinary *critical theory of society* while acknowledging the role of the psychological subject, psychologists are interested in a *critical theory of the subject* (or person, mental life, subjectivity, consciousness, experience, the psychological, etc.). I suggest that both, critical psychology (a placeholder for various critical-psychological approaches) and cultural-historical psychology (used here for the full variety of approaches including activity theory), contribute to a critical theory of the psychological. Such a critical theory of the "psychological subject" is different from a critical theory of political economy, although psychologists need to draw on and feed back into such theories. Following Horkheimer (1937), I suggest that such a critical theory of the subject needs to articulate (a) the society-individual nexus; (b) the power-infused historicity of concepts, theories, methods, and practices; (c) the ethics of traditional and critical action (including the nexus between theories and praxis); and, of course, (d) a critique of the shortcomings of traditional approaches while proposing alternatives.

The argument that a critical theory of the psychological must have primacy in the work of psychologists committed to those traditions is undermined by the academic reality that research on theoretical integration in general and a theory of subjectivity in particular is not rewarded within the institution of academic psychology (Goertzen, 2008). Mainstream psychology rather focuses on narrow and limited areas of research and expertise without any explicit overarching theory. However, the decline of grand theories in academia is misleading because all sciences are operating with explicit or implicit theories or mini-theories. Hypotheses are derived from more or less articulated theories (or are mini-theories themselves), interpretations and applications take place within theoretical assumptions or arguments, and generalizations and suggestions for future directions embody theoretical ideas. Theories can take on different shapes, including formalization, they can be expressed in ordinary or specialized language, and they look different in diverse disciplines. In short, theories still have an overarching role in the sciences and humanities, yet, without the ethos of theorizing.

Mainstream psychology is *atheoretical* and confronted with the historical fact that the discipline emulated the natural sciences and not the humanities. Yet, so my argument goes, a theory of the psychological needs to draw as much, if not more, on the *psychological humanities* than on the *psychological sciences* (Teo, 2017). I understand that such a dualistic division may be too simplistic to do justice to the complexity of the mental but it allows me to make a point: There has been no balance between the two and history has favored, for reasons of status, recognition,

money, and marketing, the psychological sciences. Yet the psychological sciences depend on theories for research, and results are understood, organized, or subsumed under theories that provide an abstraction from the particular. At the same time there is little attempt to develop encompassing or synthesizing theories that describe and comprehend psychosocial reality.

The psychological humanities (Teo, 2017), however, have been active in developing theories, and despite the postmodern assault on grand theories (Lyotard, 1979/1984), they have always articulated worldviews that were able to cope with recent developments in the material and social worlds. This is not to idealize the humanities, which have had their own problem of mini-theories, and the recent public attack on them makes it more difficult to market the idea of the psychological humanities. But there is no doubt that the theories of Norbert Elias (1897–1990), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), and Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), or more recently Butler (1990), Boltanski (2012), or Braidotti (2013), just to mention a very few thinkers, have increased the wealth of theorizing about what it means to be a complex subject. A critical theory of the subject must draw on such ideas from the psychological humanities.

We all operate with a horizon or traditions when doing psychological research or practice (Gadamer, 1960/1997). For an understanding of the complexity of the psychosocial world, a wider horizon is better than a narrow one. I suggest that critical psychologies and cultural historical approaches together allow for an expanding horizon by learning from the humanities, the arts, and the concept-driven social sciences, from history, philosophy, sociology, Science and Technology Studies (STS), anthropology, geography, and so on, as far as those disciplines are based on a practical or emancipatory knowledge interest (Habermas, 1968/1972). The research of all of these approaches, the psychological sciences as well as the psychological humanities, provide the foundational framework for a theory of the subject that considers the historically and culturally changing subject.

Critique

Critique remains an important feature and competence for critical theory. I suggest that we can learn about the significant limitations of traditional psychology especially from critical psychology, which has always had at its core the critique of the status quo. This is not to underestimate that critique has been foundational in Vygotsky's (1997) project for an alternative psychology, which showed the inescapable problems of the dominant psychologies of his time while advancing a Marxist psychology. Yet critiques of psychology have not only been articulated along the lines of some of the most important intellectual developments in the twentieth century, beginning with Marxism, phenomenology, feminism, social constructionism, or postcolonial thought (Teo, 2005); they can also be developed along the traditional-philosophical lines of ontology, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics (Teo, 2018a).

For example, feminist and postcolonial thinkers in the psychological humanities have developed arguments about the exclusionary and limited strategies of defining what it means to be human (e.g., Wynter, 2003). This is not only a critique of a mechanistic misunderstanding or a machine model of human subjects, but a critique of the rational human being that was conceived in the most important Western research traditions as male and European, while any positive definitions were always selective, with consequences that reached their peak in horrendous political practices in the first half of the twentieth century. Subaltern studies have shown (e.g., Spivak, 1988) that the *Lumpenproletariat* from the South is given no voice in the process of knowledge-making about them. Critical studies in this tradition allow one to make the argument within the psychological humanities that the concept of the *subhuman* shows a continuity from racism to fascism and to current policies concerning asylum seekers and refugees. Critical disability studies (see Goodley, 2017) have contributed to an understanding of what it sincerely means to be human, and we can learn from persons with disabilities more about the human condition than from an idealized *normal* person (usually a *man* in the history of thought). Posthuman reflections can be stretched even further, when reflections within STS not only attribute agency to humans but also to objects (Latour, 2005).

The critique of methodology needs to consider the gendered and cultural embeddedness of methods and methodology. Objectivity not only has a history (Daston & Galison, 2007); it is a *value* as much as an epistemological category, which may have a male and Western bias (Teo, 2015b). The critique of positivism or naïve empiricism, regarding the failure to take the subject into account, is important critical work when it comes to identifying the general natural-scientific self-misunderstanding of psychology. Therapy does not have the same ontic quality as medication, side effects do not have the same meaning in medicine and psychology, and the question of the good life remains central when *realigning* the mind (Smith, 2009). Realigning the mind in traditional discourses includes psychologization and *responsibilization*, for which the psy-disciplines are central (Sugarman, 2015). Primacy in studying psychosocial phenomena should go to the problem and not to the methods (Holzkamp, 1983), which would allow for the usage of qualitative and quantitative approaches in psychology. In my view, both critical and cultural-historical approaches have contributed to methodological innovations.

The critique of ethics can range from ethics codes and their instrumental instead of moral rewriting (Pope, 2016), epistemological violence committed in research (Teo, 2008), and conflicts of interest in psychiatry and corresponding diagnostic manuals (see Whitaker & Cosgrove, 2015) to the role of psychological organizations in the torture of prisoners (Aalbers & Teo, 2017). Although many critical psychologists have advanced an ethical critique of the status quo, many cultural-historical psychologists have devised concrete, useful, and applied applications that aid individuals, for example, in the process of education, or even on how the transformation of the world changes oneself at the same time (Stetsenko, 2016). Critical theory does not need to limit itself to the ontological, epistemological, or ethical critique of psychology and may include a critique of society, academia, institutions, practices, or ideas. Critique remains at the core of critical theory and allows it to draw on a

wide range of meticulous work in the psychological humanities. A recent example would be the critique of neoliberal practices, including positive psychology (Power, 2016), the happiness industry (Davies, 2015), or the critical analysis of the role of debt in human history (Graeber, 2011) – all contributing to a better understanding of human mental life.

From the psychological humanities, psychologists can also learn about the importance of hermeneutic analysis, especially when a hermeneutic deficit plagues all disciplines, but especially psychology that has a history of violent interpretations and narrow horizons (Teo, 2008). This is not idealizing the hermeneutic competences for which the humanities and arts provide significant resources, when often those disciplines do not articulate explicitly their method of inquiry. None of the human sciences can do without hermeneutics, whether this applies to texts, objects such as works of art, building structures, or human beings. Psychologists can participate in discussing the variety of hermeneutic approaches, focusing on empathy or understanding the societal meaning relations that influence individual subjectivity (Spranger, 1929). Critique also requires hermeneutics when it comes to commenting on the role of psychosocial, current events, including the election of right-wing authoritarian leaders around the world, environmental degradation, the refusal to accept collective responsibility, or globalized migration. In short, understanding and critique require us to consider the complex social, political, economic, cultural, and historical dimensions of the social world in which the person is embedded.

Critique also requires the combination of *reflexivity* and *interference* (Barad, 2006; Geerts & van der Tuin, 2013). Reflexivity means not only to understand the reflexive character of psychological categories but to be reflexive about one's own subjectivity, research community, and program, or culture. Reflexivity has been an important value and practice for many critical psychologists (see also Finlay & Gough, 2003). Importantly, critique does not solely apply to the *Other* but also to one's own standpoint. For example, the question of the degree to which one's own concepts are outcomes of specific cultural-historical processes would fit into a line of reflexivity. While reflexivity is a strength of critical psychologies, even reflexivity about reflexivity (Burman, 2006), interfering praxis has been at the forefront of many cultural-historical studies.

Reflexivity about the historicity, culturality, and sociality of knowledge in the sciences and humanities, but particularly in psychology, as attested to in the works of Kuhn (1962) or Frickel and Gross (2005), demands a critique of *epistemic grandeur* and the endorsement of *epistemic humility* (Teo, 2019). Admittedly such a value (or virtue) is more prescriptive than descriptive, because in both critical psychology and cultural-historical theory, modesty is surprisingly missing. I believe that taking the work of the psychological humanities into account necessitates such a value. In psychology, we need to reflect and interfere when privileging *a priori* our own taken-for-granted concepts and methods while understanding the cultural embeddedness of psychological theories (see also Enriquez, 1992). Of course, one could make the argument, for which there is good evidence, that Marx had this in

mind, as did Vygotsky, although critical traditions have not emphasized a critique of the historical aspect of one's own ideas.

Society-Individual Nexus

Understanding and conceptualizing the relationship between society and the individual is one of the most important problems as well as contributions of the critical traditions in the human sciences. It is a trauma in human history to realize that one is not the source of one's own ideas; one could call it a sociological trauma (see also Derrida, 1993/1994). Karl Marx addressed the issue cursorily in the *Theses on Feuerbach* and in depth in the *German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1964) where he related individual to social consciousness. Vygotsky (e.g., 1987) inaugurated the psychological discourse on individual-social relations by looking at the problem from a developmental perspective, proposing a mechanism that moves from the social to the individual, and using ideas such as appropriation or interiorization of the social in order to capture the psychosocial process. Vygotsky never forgot the biological foundation of human development and he could be dubbed the original theorist of the biopsychosocial nature of human beings.

In German critical psychology, Holzkamp (1983) focused on the society-individual nexus and developed the argument that humans have a societal nature, that an individual existence is mediated by the whole social system, and that subjectivity is grounded but not determined by contexts. More recently, Roth (2016) provided an original interpretation of Vygotsky's mechanism, identified as a *parallelism* that he developed during his Spinozian turn at the end of his life. Beyond original and theoretical-historical reconstructions of Vygotsky (e.g., Dafermos, 2018), I suggest that we also can learn from the psychological humanities not only about the process but also the content of *appropriation*. It is clear that traditional-psychological concepts such as learning, adaptation, and conceptions of society as an external variable or context do not address the problem adequately. Concepts developed by critical psychology and cultural-historical theories do more justice to the problem but may still not be sufficient. For example, we could learn from film theory (e.g., Oudart, 1978) on how individuals "stitch themselves" into a movie or into a society. The terms "appropriation" or "interiorization" seem less useful for an understanding of this process, and we can expand this idea to suggest that persons "suture themselves" into historical, social, and cultural realities. The concept of suture emphasizes the agentic nature of individuals and thereby allows us to better grasp an important process (see also Teo, 2017).

In terms of content, psychologists need to explain how marginalized individuals suture themselves or appropriate their behaviors and experiences. I submit that the concept of peformativity (Butler, 1990) that suggests that we assume a gender not because of an essence or intersubjectivity, but because we perform it, concretely explains a process and outcome that has relevance to all humans and allows LGBTQ individuals to theorize their being. *Being-in-the-world*, the Heideggerian term that

emphasizes the nexus between the individual and the world, has for some reason led phenomenologists to undervalue the structure and composition of this world, although, arguably within critical traditions, the most important task is to describe what this world looks like.

Sociology, political theory, and history are important disciplines that have conducted such an analysis. I suggest that critical theory needs to draw on the full complexity of describing this world in its intersectionality. It also means that although the description of society as capitalist or neoliberal is correct, society is also patriarchal, colonial, and modern. *Being-in-this-world* means for a Western subject to experience privileges despite possible multiple experiences of oppression and power. Understanding the world as capitalist is significant and necessary but not sufficient, for example, from the perspective of the person with a disability, who experiences the world also as having an ableist bias, which may be encountered on a daily basis, and which must be articulated.

Critical theory is the location where psychologists can be open to different, obscure, and fear-inducing ideas while attempting to understand the world. Some social-constructionist analyses can be part of critical theory, especially when it comes to human-made ideas, practices, and objects. I understand the demand for a coherent theory, but I suggest that Marx, Vygotsky, or Holzkamp have not exhausted the complexity of the subjective or objective world. The danger is that any commitment to an existing theory can become assimilative in a Piagetian sense, where everything is subsumed under an existing tradition while closing up new perspectives. On the other hand, a complete patchwork theory would mean the end of a system model of science. A dialectical compromise must be found that leads to a better understanding of what it means to be a person in this world and what psychological capabilities correspond with it. This has not been accomplished and I submit that the spirit of the psychological humanities is a greater resource to that end than the subdividing psychological sciences. A critical theory of subjectivity is an ongoing process, a process that captures the psychosocial, and is based on more than one theoretical program. Finally, the arts remain an important resource for advancing an understanding of being-in-the-world.

Historicity of Knowledge

Horkheimer (1937) not only pointed to the conceptualization of the individual-society nexus as an important contribution of critical theorizing, but he also identified the inherent historicity of knowledge. Critical approaches have a commitment to this principle, but one that has not always been put into practice. In order to do justice to the "historical" in research practices, psychologists do not need to become professional historians, but they must use historiography as a *means* to understand mental life, including the consciousness of the researcher. Psychologists can learn from historical work such as Danziger (1997) on the historical and social constitution of psychological categories, Daston and Galison (2007) on the history of

objectivity, the spread of therapeutic culture (Herman, 1995), the historical role of deception in psychological thinking (Pettit, 2013), the political and gendered dimensions of foundational theories of psychology (Vicedo, 2013), the funding of sciences (Solovey & Cravens, 2012), which increase our understanding of psychological matters of fact.

Historical work aids in understanding the microphysics of power in psychology. Such historical analysis can be combined with critique. For instance, when it comes to intelligence, the problem has to do not only with a practice that takes the social into account, as suggested by Vygotsky's famous concept of a zone of proximal development, but also about the colonial, class- and race-based constitution of the concept of intelligence in different localities. The question then becomes one of understanding in which ways the theories or concepts used in psychology have historically evolved as gender-biased, for example, or to what degree psychosocial work emphasizes the status quo and makes persons with disabilities, for instance, into problems. The history of psychologization, first in the West and now globally, needs to be an important aspect of research and the role of the latest developments in psychology, including neuroscience, should not escape critical scrutiny (see De Vos, 2016).

Psychologization, as an important subject matter of psychology, is inherently historical. The fact that psychologists have contributed to explaining social realities increasingly with psychologically individualistic terms, which may include concepts from critical or cultural-historical approaches, means that one should interrogate one's own traditions as well. It also requires us to historicize our own traditions, a principle that Marx endorsed himself. Beyond understanding the degree to which critical approaches, which are able to challenge the power of the status quo, participate in the historical process of psychologization, one can ask how critical and cultural-historical approaches can resist that tendency by developing concepts that are psychological but not individualizing.

The idea that one can develop concepts that are critical, and that take sociosubjectivity into account, does not abandon historicity or the analysis of power expressed in any concept. I do not think that the principle of historicity leads to epistemic agnosticism about the psychosocial world. If there are more adequate categories in the critical project, these categories in turn may be abandoned one day for even better categories (this does not mean believing in a *Whiggish* history). Theoretical reflection needs to identify the criteria for what makes a better concept or psychological theory. The question remains whether an alignment with streams of scientific traditional psychology or with the psychological humanities offers a better track into theorizing what a "good" concept in psychology looks like. For instance, I suggest that Herbert Marcuse's *one-dimensional man* makes for a critical-psychological concept with a profound historical background, yet one that can be updated for neoliberal forms of life (Teo, 2018b).

A historical perspective not only allows us to contribute to an understanding of ontological questions but allows a critique of the methodology and *methodologism* of psychology. One can ask why certain methods came to dominate the discipline, but also about the possibilities and limitations of existing approaches. The alignment

of psychology with the natural sciences, for example, was not a logical outcome but itself the result of cultural-historical processes, embedded in power and status needs. Similarly, the question is not merely one of how particular methods in psychology may reduce anxiety for the researcher (Devereux, 1967), but of combining such a consideration with a historical reflection on the politically motivated "givens" in psychology. Such historical studies need to combine the society-individual nexus with reflexivity, in which socio-subjectivity (e.g., psychology as a business opportunity) relates to intersubjectivity (e.g., a researcher's anxiety in terms of the subjectivity of participants), and intrasubjectivity (e.g., epistemic subjectivity).

Ethical-Political Worldview

The point of critical theory was not the development of a theory for the sake of intellectual satisfaction but in order to contribute to just and fair conditions (Horkheimer, 1937). It is reasonable to ask to which degree critical psychologies and cultural-historical psychologies are aiding in abolishing unjust conditions or changing life conditions for the better, and more generally, how onto-epistemology is infused with ethics. I suggest that critical psychologies have been explicit when reflecting on ethical-political issues, from social justice (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2009) to contrasting an ethics of justice with an ethics of care (Gilligan, 1977), and when drawing on the critically oriented psychological humanities that have provided sophisticated analyses of the moral in psychology (Brinkmann, 2011). These ethical reflections also have broader scope than educational improvements. Critical psychologists have shown not only an ethical-political commitment to social justice, but also to environmental and economic justice, issues of disability, racialization, LGBTQ issues, and their intersectionality (Rosenthal, 2016). However, I have not seen that an explicit ethics has been a primary locus of reflection for cultural-historical theories (an exception would be Stetsenko, 2016).

Critical theory needs to not only provide a better understanding of psychosocial life but also improve damaged lives (Sloan, 1996), which requires a better society. This means moving beyond practical suggestions as to how we could improve work, education, relationships, or the self, to challenging the existing world. For instance, the reality of increasing income inequality has negative consequences, which are not only social and physical health-related but also psychological (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Reflections on dispossessions and the consequences of income inequality on psychosocial life, as well as the options available for overcoming these, need to be articulated (see Weis & Fine, 2012, on the increasing need for bifocality). This means addressing the limitations of *recognition* and the importance of *redistribution* (Fraser & Honneth, 2003), the relationship between large-scale and small-scale progressive social change, and why wealth is not justly distributed. How inequality can be abolished and how societies can be made more just remain at the core of critical reflection and interference.

This is not to suggest that all critical psychologists agree on the extent of social change required. Small-scale change is sometimes advocated by community psychologists who would rather do something in the short-term than wait for large-scale change (see Fryer's, 2008, critique). However, changes on both scales require reflection on entrenched privileges that people, including academics, enjoy. Even the difficulty in envisioning large-scale social change needs to be addressed. For Western psychologists, ethical-political reflection also means establishing to what degree colonialism has influenced the sciences including psychology (Bhatia, 2018), how neocolonial thinking permeates the discipline and practice of psychology, and what role has been played by indigeneity in the development of the human sciences in the West.

Ethical reflection includes questioning the values or even virtues critical theorists should endorse. Objectivity which itself has a complex history cannot be the most significant value that critical approaches endorse since it is not only about doing justice to the subject matter of psychology but also doing justice to participants and groups, communities, and societies, and even doing justice to history. In particular, psychologists need to do justice to subjectivity, which cannot be understood exclusively from the sciences but equally needs to draw on the arts. I suggest that *epistemic humility* is an important virtue that we can derive from the psychological humanities: humility when it comes to an understanding of what it means to be human, of the concepts that are used, and of the methods and applications that are endorsed. Humility as a virtue does not apply to the *Other* but to oneself. Epistemic humility does not mean avoiding interference when problems are understood to be harmful to psychosocial life.

It should be evident that critical theory needs to develop an explicit ethical stance that is not only assumed but needs to be openly debated. Marx did that, as did Horkheimer in his works, and even Habermas was aware that capitalism produces pathologies. They all agreed that there is something wrong with the status quo, which itself needs to be theorized. In order to do that, critical theory needs to draw on the socialist literature as well as on the literature on racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and privilege, and equally on research on small-scale and large-scale change. Critical theory does not become vulnerable when it takes an ethical stance on society, ecology, or a better organization of life. The concept of *hope* and constructions of future life which may perhaps be considered idealistic need to be counterposed to the consequences of a *new nihilism* that assumes that any positive change is impossible. Theorizing is not only about describing what is but also what ought to be (Martín-Baró, 1994). This has been the task of critical theory for a long time.

Conclusion

Critical theory encompasses critical psychologies and cultural-historical theories. I suggest that a critical theory of the subject needs to rely on both, but must also incorporate intellectual innovations that have occurred in the humanities, the arts,

and the concept-driven social sciences. A critical theory of the psyche cannot be confined to one particular methodology or a single framework, but should be diverse and pluralistic and move beyond methodologies and grand thinkers to problems. It should include hermeneutic methods as they are implicitly and explicitly used in the humanities. There is no need to be parsimonious, a constraint which reflects the logic of the natural sciences. The rhetoric of being a science should be less important for critical theory than an understanding of the mental in the conduct of real life. It should also be understood that a lack of ethical-political reflection might lead cultural-historical theories or critical approaches to reactionary political embraces that need to be interrogated. For instance, I/O psychology (consider Taylorism) has been used and exploited from a capitalist but also Marxist-Leninist perspective.

Critical theory needs to renew itself on an ongoing basis if it wants to take historicity seriously. This means being open to the old as well as to the new materialism, to the importance of the symbolic, and to conversations as much as to life conditions. Cultural-historical theories and critical psychologies, so varied that it is difficult to make any kind of precise generalizations, have more overlap than articulated differences. Both need to be open to developments in the psychological sciences and the humanities. Yet should critique, historicity, the society-individual nexus, and ethics still be at the core of what it means to do critical theory, then the psychological humanities deserve a significant role, because they are central to such activities. For instance, the posthuman (Braidotti, 2013) cannot be conceived solely within the sciences.

I see critical theory and a critical theory of mental life as generative research programs. The various ideas and elements discussed here need to be integrated in a general theory of the psyche. That has not been accomplished in mainstream psychology, which has been described as disorganized, and as lacking unity and coherence. A critical theory of subjectivity would include principles that are empirically verifiable or falsifiable as well as principles that are normative rather than descriptive and should draw on a variety of intellectual and disciplinary sources. Human mental life is too complex for us to do justice to it with one single framework. A general theory of the human mind needs to account for the historicity and complexity of mental life. Maybe the first step is to discuss the conditions for the possibility of such a general theory, being aware of the internal as well as external limits put on the very work that is core to critical thought.

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Part II
Pathways of Renovation: Critiques and Innovations Within Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology

Introduction

Taken together, the contributions in Part I have presented a view of critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology as having common intellectual roots and motivations but having separated in their concrete historical trajectories. Such a perspective, therefore, suggests new opportunities for critique and mutual clarification, with a view to possible reconciliation of emergent differences of scope and focus.

It is these opportunities to which the contributions in Part II are specifically addressed. Here, the authors of each chapter focus on important critical challenges to the fundamental principles of one or both of psychological traditions, pointing to the general psychological implications of such issues and, consequently, to the significance of their resolution for the purposes of jointly advancing or reconciling both traditions.

Fernando González Rey (Chap. 6, 'Can the Concept of Activity Be Considered as a Theoretical Tool for Critical Psychologies?') critically re-examines the fundamental concept of 'activity' as developed in Soviet psychology, principally by A N Leont'ev, in the form of 'activity theory'. González Rey argues that the concept is the fruit of a (pseudo)-Marxist 'objectivism' and that its status as a foundational concept for psychology in general must therefore be challenged.

Erica Burman (Chap. 7, 'Decolonising Childhood, Reconceptualising Distress: A Critical Psychological Approach to (Deconstructing) Child Well-Being') takes the conceptualising of distress as a focal point for the vital project of decolonising childhood through bringing to bear principles of critical psychology, critical pedagogy, childhood studies and Fanonian perspectives. In this way, Burman shows the relevance of both critical and cultural-historical psychology.

Peter E Jones (Chap. 8, 'Psychology and Psychologies "from the Language End": Critical Reflections') shows the intimate interrelation between psychological theory and the conceptions of sociality embedded within the models of language and communication on which such theory depends. In that light, Jones examines

'mechanistic and decontextualising' aspects of cultural-historical semiology and argues for an '"actional-integrative" approach to sign-making'.

Marilyn Fleer, Liang Li and Zhonglian Yan (Chap. 9, 'Problematising Pedagogical Imports and Creating New Conditions for Children's Development: A Case from China') look critically at the cultural and conceptual implications and effects of Western pedagogical imports in the context of a particular kindergarten in China. The authors show the relevance of both critical psychology and cultural-historical theory for challenging the implied universality of Western conceptions of play and its relation to learning, proposing new ways of supporting children's development that speak back to the colonising influence of Western thought.

Athanasios Marvakis (Chap. 10, 'Nationalism and/or Developing Understanding of Society?') draws on German critical psychology and the work of Meacham and Riegel in his critique of contemporary conceptions of nationalism. Marvakis argues for a dynamic view of 'the complementary socio-psychological processes of decentration and re-centration' in order to capture the 'psychic aspects' of what Holzkamp called the 'societal mediatedness of individual existence'.

The third and final part of our book (Part III: 'The Emerging Themes') seeks first to crystallise the vital themes which have emerged in the critical dialogic encounters of Parts I and II in order then to set the scene for our final contribution, Fernando González Rey's Chap. 11 ('The Two Pathways of Vygotsky's Legacy: The Critical and Non-critical Co-existing Positions in Vygotsky's Thought'). Through focussing primarily on contradictions in the development and legacy of cultural-historical psychology, González Rey sets out a possible agenda for a synergistic advance of psychology as a whole in which the socially transformative drive of 'critical psychology' can be infused with the 'cultural-historical' appreciation of human subjectivity.

Chapter 6
Can the Concept of Activity Be Considered as a Theoretical Device for Critical Psychologies?

Fernando González Rey

Abstract Activity is an important concept for any critical approach to psychology. This chapter aims to discuss the metamorphosis that occurred in the concept of activity in its transition from a relevant concept for a cultural–historical psychology to its reification as a universal concept to explain all psychological phenomena, as used by A. N. Leontiev in his theoretical proposal of activity theory. During that transformation, activity became an ideological device for the definition of psychology as a Marxist dogmatic science. Further, the paper discusses the two different geneses of the concept of activity in Soviet psychology which, in turn, had historical, theoretical, and political consequences for the use of the concept. Having the critical potential to overcome behavioral psychology according to Rubinstein's definition, the concept of activity, as defined by Leontiev, became a device for the passive adaptation of, and control over, human beings through external operations with objects that become motives of human behavior after meeting human needs.

Introduction

Concepts in the history of science are not static entities that carry the same meaning once and forever. Meanings change constantly in the development of any science, in a process in which new concepts emerge and others disappear or remain fixed to questions that the science transcends in its own development. This movement characterizes scientific development, which is closely intermingled with the cultural, social, and political contexts within which science itself develops. This fact takes a particular dramatic form in the social sciences during periods of repression and extreme conflict. Examples include the World Wars and ideological forms of power such as fascism, Stalinism, and states in which ideological and religious principles rule daily life and in which differences of opinion are strongly repressed.

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Soviet psychology was characterized from its very beginning as having one theoretical position that was recognized as the best expression of a Marxist psychology but which, in fact, was invested with a particular political and ideological orientation. That position was occupied in the first half of the 1920s by Pavlov's theory of conditioned reflexes and by Bechterev's reflexology. Despite the fact that the Soviet Revolution had been considered for a long time as a step forward in Russia for more progressive political circles, in fact it represented a conservative movement in many respects, including the development of science.

Pavlov's positions were the basis of American behaviorism since its very beginning; for both North American and Russian psychology, behavior and conditioned reflexes appeared closely integrated in the beginning of the 1920s as the basis of a behavioral–materialist psychology. After 1923, when Kornilov replaced Chelpanov as director of the Institute of Psychology in Moscow, the allegiance to such Materialism characterized the search for a Marxist psychology. That movement had two main expressions: Bechterev's reflexology and Kornilov's reactology, the first attempting to replace psychology by reflexology, while the second putting behavioral reactions to external stimuli at the center of psychology. The human psyche as such was not defined in its specific ontological character, appearing always as a result of other external, objective phenomena.

Paradoxically, Chelpanov, who was fiercely accused of idealism by his former students Kornilov and Basov, leading to his replacement as director of the Institute of Psychology of Moscow, was the only Russian psychologist oriented toward the study of consciousness, emphasizing the role of the cultural and of the social in the explanation of psychical processes. Topics such as personality, treated by some of the more important world psychologists at that time such as Janet, Bergson, and Lipps and the unit of consciousness and the unconscious, covered by Freud, characterized the Psychological Seminar officially held at the institute in 1914, its year of inauguration (Bostmanova, Guseva & Ravich-Schervo, 1994).

Unfortunately, the study of the history of Soviet psychology has endured two deficits that have contributed to the historical and theoretical distortions suffered by that psychology, both in Russia and in Western countries. These distortions have firstly resulted from institutional censures during the Soviet period that led to a poor historiography within Soviet psychology of its own course. After the Soviet period, the lack of interest in everything that had occurred in Soviet times extended to Soviet psychology. Consequently, there was no interest in dealing with the history of Soviet psychology (Bogdanshikov, 2008). These omissions have strongly influenced how that psychology has been introduced and developed in Western psychology.

Soviet psychology, split into different "schools," was an integrative movement with many points of contact, disagreement, and contradiction between these "schools." Its main concepts, including activity, had different geneses and were integrated within different theoretical systems, having different meanings as a result. However, all of these "schools" were based on Soviet Marxism, which was characterized by an overwhelming focus on materialism over the dialectic, a feature that was imposed on psychology. As a result of this, behavior and concepts closely

related to it, such as internalization, assimilation, and mediation, strongly influenced that psychology in the 1920s, but not all its streams and leaders responded in the same way to that influence.

From the very beginning of the 1920s, in 1922 to be exact, S. L. Rubinstein, after forming as doctor of philosophy in Germany, introduced the concept of activity into Soviet psychology (Zinchenko, 2012). Rubinstein represented a new pathway in relation to the dominant forces in Soviet psychology. Instead of separating activity from consciousness, Rubinstein introduced a more dialectical principle of the unity of consciousness and activity. Consciousness instead of behavior turned into the center of attention for Rubinstein.

In 1923 after replacing Chelpanov as director of the Institute of Psychology of Moscow, Kornilov's reactology was politically empowered, and he organized around him an important group of young psychologists, among whom were Luria, Vygotsky, and Leontiev: the conscious search for a Marxist psychology became the priority of the institute. Luria was nominated by Kornilov as secretary of the institute in 1924, the same year that Vygotsky and Leontiev became members of Kornilov's group. The concept of activity was assumed only by Rubinstein, who always was a critic of Kornilov's position.

While the effort on behalf of a Marxist psychology was addressed to the development of an objective psychology based on stimulus, reactions, and behavior, the legacy from Russian idealistic philosophers was eliminated from the scenario of psychology. According to Budilova (disciple of Rubinstein), one of the more important Soviet authorities on the Russian sociopsychological questions was the doctoral thesis of M. M. Troitski, "The first Russian psychological work that carries an historical character." Troitski was head of the University of Moscow and the president of the Psychological Society of Moscow in 1885, (Budilova, 1983, p.19). Particularly impressive is a Troitski quotation highlighted by Budilova: "The concept of individuals is interrelated with signs…. In this way, concepts make up the cultural form of human thinking, appearing as a powerful organ of social relationships" (Budilova, 1983, p. 24). Troitski was one of the more influential idealistic philosophers attempting to advance psychology in the period before the October Russian Revolution.

The link between Russian philosophy and psychology was cut when Chelpanov was replaced by Kornilov. G. Shpet, close collaborator of Chelpanov and who organized the first Russian Cabinet of Ethnical Psychology in 1920, also was expelled from the institute. The institute took the path of a natural, behavioral, and instrumental psychology in Kornilov's effort to create a Marxist psychology. Paradoxically, that approximation to Marxism led to the separation of psychology from philosophy and the social sciences.

After Chelpanov's fall from the Institute of Psychology of Moscow, the picture of Soviet psychology drastically changed. While reflexology and reactology fought to be the main interpretation of Marxism of the human psyche, Rubinstein advanced important theoretical works on a new representation of human consciousness, in which it was inseparable from human activity. Activity, as the concept was discussed by Rubinstein, transforms into an important critical device to overcome the

concept of behavior central for the mainstream of Russian and American psychology respectively in the second half of the 1920s.

The importance of the concept of activity for psychology, as it was understood by Rubinstein, implied the unity of human action, consciousness, and sensuousness. Differently from behavior, and rather than being oriented by or to the object, activity supposed the inseparable unity between human action and human consciousness. Unity was the basis of two important shifts in the course of Soviet psychology: firstly, it created the basis for a new representation of consciousness, in which consciousness expresses and develops itself in human actions; secondly, human actions are never regulated from the outside, from the environment – a subject's actions always carry a psychological nature.

As part of Kornilov's group, Luria, Vygotsky, and Leontiev shared an objectivistic–instrumental position between 1927 and 1930, years in which they would focus on the study of higher psychological functions, stressing their mediated and internalized character, instead of their specific psychological nature and its integration within more complex psychological systems.

This chapter aims to discuss the metamorphosis that occurred in the concept of activity in its transition from a relevant concept for a cultural–historical psychology to its reification as a universal concept to explain all psychological phenomena, as used by A. N. Leontiev in his theoretical proposal of activity theory. During that transformation, activity became an ideological device for the definition of psychology as a Marxist science.

Another central claim of this paper is its support for the historical hypothesis of the two different geneses of the concept of activity in Soviet psychology which, in turn, had historical, theoretical, and political consequences for the use of the concept. Having the critical potential to overcome behavioral psychology according to Rubinstein's definition, the concept of activity, as defined by Leontiev, became a device for the passive adaptation of, and control over, human beings through external operations with objects that become motives of human behavior after meeting human needs.

Transforming the concept of activity into a universal concept and principle, through which other psychological concepts should be explained, Leontiev guaranteed the founding of an objective, concrete, materialist psychology according to the principles that had ruled Soviet Marxist philosophy since the 1920s, when the struggle between idealism and materialism was invested with a political connotation (Bostmanova et al., 1994).

The Concept of Activity in Soviet Psychology

As introduced above, Soviet psychology had two main influences from the Russian period, one due to the Russian neurology of higher nervous activity and the other due to idealistic philosophers. Nonetheless, the way in which Marxism was imposed as the official doctrine in Soviet universities in 1922 (Bostmanova et al., 1994) led

to the emergence, and dominance of a naïve naturalist materialist position which was echoed quickly in psychology.

Despite the fact that the Soviet State and the Russian Communist Party completely ruled the institutional and social order at the time, in psychology it was the internal climate in the Soviet scientific institutions that was an important factor in the fear, suspicion, and censure that ruled from that time on, even when the struggle against idealistic positions took on a political connotation from the beginning of the 1920s, contributing to the psychological institutional climate of tension.

The beginning of the 1930s was a difficult period in the history of the Soviet Union: Stalin's repression extended to all spheres of Soviet society. Under these circumstances a group of Vygotsky's collaborators and students moved to Kharkov in the early years of the 1930s, with A. N. Leontiev as their leader. That movement, and the fact that Vygotsky stayed in Moscow, has never had a convincing historical explanation. In Kharkov, the group began to center on the concept of object-based activity over language, speech, and motivation, leading progressively to a split between Vygotsky and Leontiev (Bratus 2013; Zinchenko, 2009, 2012; Zavershneva, 2016).

It was in Kharkov that Leontiev's definition of activity began to transform into the distinctive theoretical feature of that group. This new definition of activity centered on material activities with objects. The genesis of psychological functions was understood mainly as the result of the child's manipulation of objects. Operations with objects gradually became the only principle to explain the genesis of the human psyche. Psychological functions came to be defined as internal activity resulting from the internalization of external operations.

In relation to the 1930s, Zinchenko stressed:

> In the 1930s, to all intent and purposes, the country lost consciousness and unconsciousness both literally and figuratively […] Consciousness was declared to be something secondary, second-class, and was then replaced by an ideology that was shaping not a "new man", according to M. Gorky, but a "dull man" according to M. Zoshchenko. (Zinchenko, 2009, p.50)

That situation clearly influenced the path taken by the Kharkov school. Consciousness and speech came to be understood as epiphenomena of activities with objects. On this basis the first strong criticisms of Vygotsky were oriented toward the role attributed by him to speech in the definition of human consciousness.

As Davydov critically pointed out:

> At the time, A. N. Leontiev, with his group of Kharkov collaborators, did not follow Vygotsky's orientation toward the study of the structure of consciousness, and did not recognize the developmental functions of emotions, but remained in a position to study the genesis and development of consciousness in practical activity in terms of research on the structure of their own activity. (Davydov, 1996, p.6. – my translation from Russian)

Nonetheless, in 1930 the topic of consciousness continued to be central in Rubinstein's work. His book, "The Foundations of Psychology," originally published in 1935, had a great impact on Soviet psychology at the time and

consciousness was one of the book's key concepts. Besides this, in 1931 Rubinstein invited Vygotsky to take the place of Basov in the chair of psychology of the Hertzen Pedagogical Institute due to his premature death. Vygotsky began to travel periodically from Moscow to Leningrad to give his lectures, and despite the lack of historical attention to this fact, this was the time during which Vygotsky turned to consciousness as the main topic of psychology. That turning point during the last years of his life led to the radical rupture with Leontiev (Zavershneva, 2016).

Vygotsky's turning point began in 1932 with his work, "On the problem of the psychology of the actor's creative work," in which he recognized the active and generative character of emotions in the genesis of new psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1999). Until 1930, Vygotsky, like Luria and Leontiev, expressed a strong behavioral orientation, understanding higher psychological functions through the mediation of signs, without giving any attention to their psychological nature. As noted by Seniushenko: "For L. S. Vygotsky the key question (his reference is to 1931 – my note; FGR) was not how higher psychological function become 'physiologically internal', but how they emerge as a new kind of individual form of child's behavior" (Seniushenkov, 2006, p.14). Behavioral orientation was also the basis of Leontiev's definition of activity as follows: "Not from stimulus to reaction, but from stimulus through instrument (drawing a triangle) to reaction. The reaction is mediated" (Leontiev, 1986, p.111).

Activity is taken by Leontiev as a system in itself, appearing as an ontological presupposition, on which basis the psychological, including consciousness and personality, was considered a mere result, and sociality was omitted since communication was explained through the same scheme as activity with objective, material objects. Leontiev's comprehension of activity is defined by a specific sequence of actions and operations oriented by one motive, defined by him as the object of activity, toward which the activity advances as a goal-oriented system. That position characterized Leontiev's works from the Kharkov period, stressing activity and not consciousness as the system to be studied by psychology: "Objects themselves can become stimuli, goals, or tools only in a system of human activity" (Leontiev, 1978, p.67). The subject of activity is completely omitted; the activity is the basis of psychological functions and from such a condition regulates human behavior; feelings, reflections, and the living network of the subject's existence have no room within Leontiev's definition of activity.

Where in this narrow objective and object-based definition of activity do individuals stand, with their complex and singular histories, their dreams and fantasies, their different forms of engagement within institutional networks, their forms of sociality within the symbolical–historical constructions within which all human systems function? The human as depicted by Leontiev appeared in terms of stimuli, with goals understood within the structure of activity and tools, which was a very strong remnant of the behavioral period of Kornilov's group.

> Thus, the object of activity is twofold: first, in its independent existence as subordinated to itself and transforming the activity of the subject; second as an image of the object, as a

> product of the psychological reflection of its nature that is realized as an activity of the subject and cannot exist otherwise. (Leontiev, 1978, p.52)[1]

The above statement by Leontiev is a clear expression of the complete subordination of human psychological processes to external, material objects and of how the object can have an independent existence. There are no relations that characterize how humans deal with objects, rather than the objects in themselves transforming the activity of the subject. Even the image of the object is defined by Leontiev as a reflection, so nothing new is created through human perception.

For Rubinstein, unlike Leontiev, activity as a concept was integrated within other psychological concepts that remained fragmented in the psychology of that time, which mostly designed its concepts as enclosed within an internal representation of mind outside of culture and social life and without considering their historical character.

The concept of activity as defined by Rubinstein was aimed at transcending the natural study of psychological functions and the dichotomy between stimulus and response. Activity allows the understanding of consciousness, sensuousness, and environment as an inseparable unit, having as its basis a dialectical comprehension of the integration of culture and life, as defined through the principle of the unity of activity and consciousness. This definition of activity could be represented as a first step in advancing a representation of consciousness as a psychical system in process, toward which Vygotsky seemed to be oriented through his concepts of the word's sense and *perezhivanie* in the last period of his work.

Rubinstein's definition of activity emphasized its subjects, its shared character, stressing the presence of others in human activity, and his definition also stressed the creative feature of activity. Rubinstein stated: "Within a creation, its very creator is created. There is always one path – if it is there – for the creation of a big personality: a lot of work with a lot of creation. A personality will be more relevant, the wider its sphere of actions, the wider the world in which it lives" (Rubinstein, 1986, p.106 – my translation from Russian). Activity in Rubinstein's definition was not a system in itself, with its own structure and processes, but was understood as a subject's activity, as a concept through which consciousness and psychological processes were always in action in different spheres of human life.

Rubinstein's definition of activity was shared by most Soviet psychologists, including some of the closer collaborators of Leontiev at different times, such as Bozhovich (1968), and later by Davydov (1996) and Zinchenko (2009). For Rubinstein, psychological processes and phenomena belong to the psychological realm, being inseparable from one psychological system, whether personality or consciousness, concepts which at that time were only vaguely defined in Soviet

[1] I made a small change in the original English translation based on the original Russian publication (Leontiev, 1975, p.84). Instead of "as an image of the object, as a product of its property of psychological reflection," there appears "as a product of the psychological reflection of its nature." This change had a twofold motivation, firstly because this is how it appeared in the Russian version and, secondly, because it stressed an important theoretical position of Leontiev's throughout his work; reflection is understood as a reproduction of the quality of the "real world" in the image.

psychology (Tolstyx, 2008; Osipov, 2012). Rubinstein always referred activity to actions and acts: “The unity of activity that integrates actions and acts, takes place in the unity of its starting motives and ending goals, which are the motives and goals of personality. Therefore, the study of the psychological side of activity is the study of personality in the course of its activity” (Rubinstein, 1946, pp.619–622).

In the quotation above, Rubinstein pointed out the main value of the concept of activity as being inseparable from consciousness and personality; such a definition of the concept allowed the overcoming of the representation of the human psyche in isolated elements or separate functions, which, even today, is how the psyche is taken in much empirical research. What Rubinstein defined as motives and goals of personality were transformed by Leontiev into motives and goals of activity, personality and motives both being explained in terms of activity, motives as the object of activity and personality as a moment and result of activity: “A study of personality as a moment of activity and its product constitutes a special, although not *isolated* psychological problem” (Leontiev, 1978, p.91).

The transition from the concept of activity to activity theory occurred as a result of the transformation of activity into the primary and main concept of Leontiev’s theoretical proposal. Leontiev’s last book, “Activity, Consciousness and Personality,” represented a more decisive and mature step in the formulation of activity theory. The book compiled three papers published by Leontiev in three different issues of the Soviet journal, “Questions of Philosophy.” More clearly than ever before, Leontiev explained how consciousness, motive, subject, personality, and psychological functions must be explained primarily through their genesis in activity with material objects from the “real world.” Also more clearly than ever before, he made explicit the main difference between his comprehension of activity and that defined by Rubinstein:

> The concept of the subject of activity is another matter. In the first place, that is, before the more important moments that form the process of activity are explained, the subject remains outside the limits of investigation. He appears only as a prerequisite of activity and the forms of psychic reflections elicited by it makes it necessary to introduce the concept of the concrete subject, of the personality as of an internal moment of activity. (Leontiev, 1978, p.91)

The main principles of the activity theory were summarized by D. Leontiev, Leontiev’s grandson, as follows:

> The key explanatory concept he used to make sense of life was the concept of object-related activity… The two key principles of activity theory can be articulated as follows: (1) All human mental processes, functions and structures emerge, develop, and change in an object-related activity that links individuals to the world. (2) All human mental processes and functions are derivatives of external activities, and as such they are themselves the forms of object-related activities, by maintaining within themselves the reduced structure of external activity. (D. Leontiev, 2002, pp. 50–51)

Leontiev’s reductionist position in relation to activity as a theoretical principle had force not only as a theoretical matter, but also as a political position, because it detached from human beings any capacity to create, to subvert the order that is dominant in the system of external activity. At the same time being oriented to

operations with objects, activity, in Leontiev's definition, also detached individuals and groups from their complex networks of social relationships, within which individual positions are always in the tension of possible changes. To state that all human mental processes and functions maintain within themselves the reduced structure of external activity implies the exclusion of the generative character of human subjectivity and the complete subordination of individuals to the dominant order within which the current structure of human activity emerges.

The main principles outlined by Leontiev's activity theory implicitly or explicitly led to the following consequences in Soviet psychology: (1) Activity was understood, above all, as external, objective, and practical activity, and its influence defined consciousness, personality, and psychological functions; (2) this definition of activity as material–practical activity left aside other kinds of human activities, such as intellectual creative activities, sporting activities, musical activities, and many others; (3) the split between activity and communication, overvaluing the material side of human activity was made to the detriment of its affective, symbolic, and relational side; (4) the identity of external and internal activity by structure made internal activity an epiphenomenon of the external; and (5) there was a complete omission of the subject's active character, which was replaced by the mechanism of internalization as the main process to explain how external, practical activity is turned into internal activity.

The polemic between Leontiev and Rubinstein, instead of leading to the advancement of two different lines of thought, upon which new research and ideas could be developed, ended in a dramatic purge against Rubinstein, in which Leontiev and Galperin actively participated as accusers (State University of Moscow, 1989; Brushlinsky, 2001). This purge was one of many that took place in the Soviet sciences as a result of the campaign begun by Lysenko in relation to Soviet genetics, extending to all Soviet sciences in the name of Marxism and against cosmopolitanism. As result of such a process, in April of 1949, Rubinstein was removed from all his responsibilities in the main institutions of teaching and research in Soviet psychology: the chair of psychology in the Faculty of Philosophy of the Moscow State University, head of the Department of Psychology in the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, and corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union.

Activity Theory: A New Attempt to Monopolize the Definition of a Marxist Psychology with Official Political Support

After the 1920s, during the period in which Rubinstein was the main scholar and recognized institutional figure of Soviet psychology, between 1931 and 1949, and despite the Communist Party's decrees that directly affected psychology, there was an epoch in which the institutional climate in psychological institutions was, paradoxically, less repressive than in the second half of the 1920s. This period was

characterized by representatives from different theoretical tendencies occupying important academic and institutional positions. As Antsiferova and Bruschlinsky remembered:

> Rubinstein, his students and collaborators worked in close creative contact with many other Soviet psychologists. According to M. G. Yarochevsky, in Leningrad of the 1930s, "there were broad possibilities for informal communication between scientists. To Rubinstein's two bedroom apartment in Salovoi, Vygotsky and Leontiev, Ananiev and Roguinsky came to share their ideas. His Chair in the Hertzen Pedagogical Institute was visited by Luria, Sankov and Kravkov, among others. (Yarochevsky, 2007, as cited in Antsiferova & Brushlinsky, 1997, p.226 – my translation from Russian)

Rubinstein was referred to in very similar terms by other Russian psychologists, such as V. P. Zinchenko (2012) and I. S. Yakimanskaya (2012), who had been his students at the Moscow State University. Rubinstein was centered on the development of science; his institutional leadership was used to integrate people. Examples of his willingness and openness to all positions that were simultaneously advanced in Soviet psychology at that time include: his conference with the Kharkov group in 1938 (Zinchenko, 2012); his invitation to Vygotsky in 1931 to occupy the position held by Basov until his death; the organization of Leontiev's defense of his doctoral thesis in the Department of Psychology that he headed in the Hertzen Pedagogical Institute in 1942, despite his disagreements with Leontiev's position in relation to activity; and his invitation to Galperin and Leontiev to be part of the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Moscow State University, after he was named head of the chair of psychology in the Faculty of Philosophy of that university. These are a few from among many other examples of his open and democratic position in times when democracy characterized neither society nor science.

Rubinstein continued as professor in the Department of Psychology at the Moscow State University until his death in 1960. After his death his laboratory was under threat of closure, while his old colleagues supported the "leftist" movement of Ilyenkov and Zinoviev in the Faculty of Philosophy (Abuljanova & Volovnikova, 2003). As a result of this, some of Rubinstein's young students, such as Brushlinsky, could only defend their doctoral theses in 1972 when the Institute of Psychology at the Academy of Sciences was opened.

The definition of Leontiev's activity theory expressed a political meaning, which, intentionally or not, had two important consequences. The first was to separate his own theoretical position from Vygotsky's in order to appear as the only authentic Marxist position in Soviet psychology. The second consequence was to separate himself from other Soviet psychologists beyond his group, such as Ananiev, Miasichev, Bozhovich, and her group and Rubinstein and his group, who were widely ignored during the period in which Leontiev and his activity theory appeared as the official version of Soviet psychology, between the beginning of 1960 until the middle of the 1970s.

As Vassilieva stressed, "The strong ideological underpinning no doubt contributed to the rise of the theory of activity to the status of the official Soviet psychological doctrine" (Vassilieva, 2010, p.150). Leontiev's search for political visibility seemed to have appeared via a sequence of criticisms addressed against Vygotsky

from 1937 onward, having as their basis ideological arguments. Taking advantage of the opportune political moment created by the Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party against Pedology in 1936, Leontiev addressed a strong criticism at Vygotsky's ideological deviations, having as the central point the criticism of Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*, environment, and his proximity to Durkheim's positions (Leontiev, 1937/1998). From that moment on, as this article will demonstrate, Leontiev's positions were addressed toward relegating the figure of Vygotsky to second place. Criticism based on political arguments was the best way to diminish any scientist during the Soviet period, and this is what Leontiev did in his criticisms of Vygotsky, as is evident in the next accusation against him:

> Durkheim openly declared: "a person is a dual being: an individual being has its roots in an organism and has a circle of activity that turns out to be very limited, while a social being represents the highest reality of the intellectual and moral order that we can learn by observation – I mean society." This declaration can serve as the banner of neopositivism, but it can be transformed into a verdict on the Vygotskian theory of environment. (Leontiev, 1998, p.119)

Leontiev's pretense of being the only Soviet psychologist to achieve a psychology capable of embodying Marxist–Leninist principles is clear by the way his own family[2] represented such a matter. A. A. Leontiev wrote:

> Leontiev's work was inseparably bound up with two other themes, namely the development of the problem of activity, and the problem of consciousness. All these different directions were aimed at the accomplishment of the extremely important task of reorganizing psychology along consistent Marxist-Leninist lines, a task that Vygotsky formulated, but never accomplished. (Leontiev, 1984, p.28)

This quotation clearly remarks on the failure of Vygotsky in this regard. Since his open criticism of Vygotsky in 1937, Leontiev's political career quickly thrived. After Rubinstein was pushed out, Teplov was provisionally the chair of psychology at the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Philosophy of the Moscow State University. In 1951, Leontiev replaced Teplov as the head of that department (Moscow State University, 1989). From that moment onward, his political career grew meteorically; in 1953 he was awarded the K. D. Ushinskii medal, and his career peaked when he was laureate for the Lenin Prize in 1963.

It is quite astonishing that, despite these important historical facts being in publication since 1989, there has been no reference to them within the circles of Vygotskian studies in Western psychology.

Despite the relevance of Vygotsky's entrance to the United States and his promotion from there to almost all of the countries in which Vygotsky has achieved relevance, making him accessible to the public in different Western countries, that interpretation was made through the lenses of American philosophical and psychological traditions. Instead of that interpretation being considered as a first step in the development of new interpretations of Vygotsky and Soviet psychology, it was assumed in a very a-critical way in many Western countries.

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[2] Leontiev's son and grandson were also highly recognized within Soviet psychology.

Despite the high political power of Leontiev in the 1960s, Vygotsky's selected works, which were ready for publication at that time, were only published after Leontiev's death in the 1980s (Yasnitsky, 2016). Moreover, in his preface to the 1965 edition of "The Psychology of Art," Leontiev continued to discredit Vygotsky:

> After forty years of claiming that Soviet psychologists had done much with Vygotsky and after him, many of the positions of this psychological book should be interpreted in another way – from the position of contemporary representations of activity and human consciousness. (Leontiev, 1965, p. X; my translation from Russian)

The message in this quotation is clear; it is not Vygotsky that is the main reference point for Soviet psychology; his positions were transcended by Leontiev's definitions of activity and consciousness, the latter being understood as an epiphenomenon of the former. In that critical preface, Leontiev continued to render cult status to the official political slogans in fashion at that time.

> The Soviet knowledge of art was still taking its first steps. This was a period of over-evaluation of old values and a period in which a huge analysis began in literature and art: in the circles of Soviet intellectualism there reigned an atmosphere that stimulated many aspirations. The word "socialist realism" was still not pronounced. (Leontiev, 1965, p.IV – my translation from Russian)

Using the same terminology based on ideological dogmas prevailing in the Soviet political climate at the time, some years after Rubinstein's fall, he continued attacking Rubinstein on the basis of Lysenko's positions, something that any honorable Soviet scientist would be incapable of defending at that time. Criticizing Rubinstein, Leontiev stressed:

> Thus, Rubinstein (criticizing his book "Principles of Psychology") presented the theories of "morganists" (followers of Morgan) and Lysenko as having the same importance, when indeed they are completely opposed to each other. The theories of Morgan, Weismann and Mendel were quoted and applied in Soviet psychology before the Resolution of the July 4th 1936 of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party was approved. (Leontiev, 1965, p.23 – my translation from Spanish)

The cultural–historical tradition, as its definition suggests, must be capable of discussing theories within their cultural and historical times. Nonetheless, Soviet psychology and its authors have never been discussed by taking into consideration their different historical moments. This fact not only led to the omission of that history, but also to theoretical distortions in the way these theories were assumed by Western psychology.

After the criticisms were addressed toward Vygotsky and Rubinstein by Leontiev, which were based on political and ideological reasons, the following question has to be answered: Is it possible to consider activity theory as a scientific theory? Theories are generative systems that represent an assembly of living concepts that, in their "play" and relations, allow the generation of new meanings related to different questions, opening up intelligibility on the subject of study. Theories must be in continuous movement, through which a progression of new questions appears. Concepts in any theory are always in process leaving room for new theoretical constructions and for their own improvement. Theories are models of thinking within

which concepts represent moments in the general movement of the model. Is this requirement fulfilled by Leontiev's activity theory? Leontiev, in fact, saw theory, as well as consciousness, not as a human construction but as a reflection of "reality."

Activity theory has not advanced in its explanatory capacity; internalized operations do not represent different qualitative phenomena in relation to external activity. Leontiev's lack of theorization and the empirical character of the research developed by his group were mainly oriented toward the study of cognitive psychological functions. In fact, psychological functions, according to their experimental research, are separated from the subject of the functions, as well as from the social–cultural settings within which individuals as subjects of these functions live. Rather than understanding the diversity of human activities entrenched into complex systems of social relations in such a process from which subjectivity emerges, Leontiev stressed material activities as a primary and specific set of actions with material objects from which emerge psychological processes. Leontiev stated: "It is hardly necessary now to prove that at initial stages of its development, activity necessarily has the form of external processes and that correspondingly, the psychic image is a product of these processes connecting the subject in a practical way with objective reality" (Leontiev, 1978, p.56).

For Leontiev, external processes connect the subject and realities. Once again, it would be pertinent to ask ourselves which reality the author is thinking of. There are no material realities split from the human relationships within which these realities emerge and exist. Leontiev, in this last book, maintained the same language as in his works from the 1930s. He always used 'psychic image' as the best term to express the psyche as a reflection of the objective world.

Activity theory was a set of interrelated concepts, sensitive only to study by empirical and objective experimental methods; descriptions based on experimental data allowed the concepts used to be made explicit. Any theoretical idea inferred from theoretical constructions was omitted. So it is very difficult to speak about activity theory in the terms by which it was defined by Leontiev, despite the fact that he and his followers coining the term.

The timeline of Leontiev's position in relation to activity is easy to follow since it has not changed from the Kharkov period. As Davydov stated:

> The solution given by Vygotsky to this problem (the author referred to the problem of external activity becoming internal. My note) his disciples did not adequately understand. They opted for another solution – they followed the "psychologization" of the methodological approach to activity ruled by the idea of individual activity as a 'carrier' of external activity on its way to individual activity. This idea was on the basis of the Leontiev's works and that of his collaborators from the 1930s to the 1970s. (Davydov & Radzijovsky, 1981, p. 76)

The main orientation of Leontiev and his collaborators during the 1960s and 1970s, the more powerful political period in the career of Leontiev, was also recognized by one of his younger collaborators, B. S. Bratus, who stated:

> In the 1960s–1970s the priority was the study of sensation, perception, memory and thinking from the position of activity theory. In a certain way, until recently at the well instructed Faculty of Psychology from the Moscow State University, a stronger group of researchers

> and the best installation of the Faculty were dedicated to the topic of perception. (This research was mainly done in response to demands and decrees of the Ministry of Education). Those research leaders frequently engaged in sharp polemics with to each other (Some of the leaders of these groups were V. P. Zinchenko, Yu. B. Gipennreiter and A. N. Leontiev himself). (Bratus, B.S, 2013, p. 20)

Topics like communication, institutions, societal processes, subject, and subjectivity that in one way or another were part of the critical approaches discussed in this book were completely absent from Leontiev's activity theory.

The Concept of Activity as a Theoretical Device for a Critical Cultural–Historical Psychology

In the polarized world of the Cold War, Leontiev, who was one of the main interlocutors in the American discovery of Russian psychology, gained a place as representative of a psychology oriented toward subverting the mainstream of world psychology in the 1960s. He was even presented as an opponent of Pavlov, when Pavlov was no longer dominant in any way in the Soviet Union at that time. That idealized image of the "troika" was expressed by Bruner after his visit to the Soviet Union in the following terms: "I found these young Russian scholars in cognitive science, who were battling against Pavlov in much the same way I had been battling against the Skinnerian approach" (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012, p. 5).

The place given to Leontiev in Western psychology to some extent resulted from the picture of Russian psychology seen through the lenses that Luria and Leontiev offered to American psychologists (mainly Bruner, Cole, and Wertsch, the pioneers in bringing Russian psychology to the American people) which presented Luria and Leontiev as inseparable from Vygotsky.

The same occurred in some of the critical movements in Latin America and in some parts of Europe between the 1960s and 1980s, which, influenced by Marxism, found in Leontiev an expression of Marxist psychology. In such a way, he was integrated into the work of these different critical streams (such as Holzkamp and Lane, among other representatives of critical psychologies). I. Parker has been one exception in this respect. Drawing a picture of some of the critical devices that are at the same time expressions of conservative positions, he stated: "Activity theory has been one of the important resources for radical work, in France for example (Seve, 1978), and even for a current called 'Critical Psychology' (Tolman & Maiers, 1994) in Germany and, to an extent, in Denmark, but it still functioned as a mainstream psychology in the bureaucratized states of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe until the 1990s" (Parker, 1999, p. 4).

Specifically, this chapter has attempted to highlight the difference between activity theory, which aimed to monopolize the use of the concept of activity in Soviet psychology, and the use of the concept by other Russian psychologists, mainly S. L. Rubinstein, who introduced the concept into Soviet psychology. He introduced it as a concept that was inseparable from consciousness, opening up space to

understand activity as conscious productions within which the objective and subjective sides of human action were in such a dialectical relation that one became inseparable from the other. Vygotsky, in his last works, also advanced a new definition of concepts closely related to his definitions of *perezhivanie* and sense as these concepts appeared in the last stages of his work, between 1931 and 1934. However, only his outline for a book focused on consciousness has remained as a historical testimony through the table of contents that Vygotsky intended to develop (Zavershneva, 2016).

Activity, from my point of view, is an important concept for any critical approach due to the following arguments:

- First, this concept leads to the overcoming of the naturalized and individualistic concepts of the mainstream of psychology in different historical moments, since activity stresses the active action of individuals and groups on their lived conditions. Instead of the concept of behavior, activity permits an advance beyond the current moment of action, implying in this way the history of individuals, of groups, and of the same context within which any activity takes place. This characteristic, of course, leads to the integration of subjectivity and not consciousness within the comprehension of activity as a concept.
- Activity permits an understanding of the system of human subjectivity in process, overcoming the split between practice and subjective systems, whether social or individual (González Rey, 2009, 2014a,b, 2016, 2017). From this point of view, activity necessarily has to be assembled within a system of concepts that implies a new qualitative comprehension of the human psyche as such. This system, for us, is human subjectivity. Due to the repression within psychology during Soviet times, this system appeared in Vygotsky's and Rubinstein's work as consciousness.
- Activity theory made the concept of activity the main psychological concept from which all psychological explanations found their genesis, but, as was exemplified above in Bratus' own words, this position only found its expression during the 1960s and 1970s in the experimental studies of cognitive psychological functions, which were required by the Ministry of Education at that time. Activity theory was a counterweight for other strands of psychology, keeping the behavioral character of the theoretical foundations within which Leontiev was formed as a scientist, Kornilov's reactology and the behavioral–instrumental period of Vygotsky's work; both Kornilov and Vygotsky supervised Leontiev's work until the 1930s.

Final Remarks

- The concept of activity was one of the key concepts of Soviet psychological positions and was used by all of its different "schools." However, it was only Leontiev who proposed a theory centered on this concept, taking object-based activity as

the main system to be studied by psychology. The other approaches in Soviet psychology were oriented toward a focus on psychical systems, such as consciousness or personality. Activity allowed those systems to be understood, not as intrapsychical entities, but as systems in process during human actions.

- A. N. Leontiev, in his attempt to be politically hegemonic, criticized and attempted to diminish both Vygotsky and Rubinstein, who were his most serious competitors in the proposal described above. As has been sufficiently demonstrated throughout this paper, Leontiev separated himself from Vygotsky's positions from the time of the foundation of the Kharkov group. This process deepened further in the last years of Vygotsky's life as a result of his turn toward the study of consciousness as the main goal of psychology (Zavershneva, 2016).
- Soviet Marxism represented a mechanical materialism, and activity theory was completely based on its main principles, instead of looking for a creative way to explain the materialist character of cultural phenomena, including human subjectivity. The ideal, as such, was reduced to a reflection of the material, excluding the generative character of the human mind.
- The proclamation by Leontiev of identity between external and internal activities, due to their structure, inevitably led to a mechanical and dogmatic explanation of the genesis of human psyche; any internal activity, properly psychological, first had to be external and only later became internal. So mental operations must be preceded by material operations with objects, overlooking the important role of communication in the genesis and development of human consciousness.
- Methodologically, Soviet Marxism prioritized the search for objectivity over the dialectic, a fact that influenced Soviet psychology in general. However, for Leontiev it appeared not only as a methodological orientation, but as a theoretical position. The focus of activity theory was the study of cognitive functions through object-based activities. The absence of, or the secondary treatment of, topics such as communication, personality, consciousness, and social systems as symbolical realities in Soviet psychology, to some extent, resulted from limitations in activity theory, which received strong political support during its dominant period.

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Chapter 7
Decolonising Childhood, Reconceptualising Distress: A Critical Psychological Approach to (Deconstructing) Child Well-Being

Erica Burman

Abstract This chapter offers three critical frames for reconceptualising the current UK concern over child mental health, from critical psychology and education, childhood studies and Fanonian perspectives. Firstly, I address how critical psychological interventions highlight prevailing strategies of psychologisation and individualisation that enter into children's lives, in particular through educational practices. Secondly, while the discipline of childhood studies has challenged prevailing discourses that instrumentalise children and childhood and subordinate children's current lives to utopias or (especially) dystopias of what they later could become, a new approach, 'child as method', is discussed as deepening such analyses to read characteristics of and relations constellated around children/childhood as diagnostic of wider axes of power. Finally, I indicate the relevance of the practical work and writing of the critical psychiatrist and revolutionary activist Frantz Fanon, as offering insights into the ways alienation, disaffection, oppression and marginalisation are both psychic and political questions that offer new ways of understanding and engaging with distress. Such resources therefore not only indicate further resources for the consideration of cultural-historical and critical psychology but they also highlight the political agendas at play in current discussions of child mental health and prompt practical strategies for intervention.

While children and young people's mental health appears to be rising up policy agendas in Britain, this recurrent focus can be read as a politically potent – due to depoliticising – way of engaging with poverty, educational and security issues. In this context, in this chapter I indicate three complementary critical analytical frameworks for reconceptualising the current concern over child mental health, from (1)

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critical psychology and educational studies, (2) childhood studies and (3) Fanonian perspectives on decolonisation and postcolonialism. I suggest that these resources not only help to highlight the political agendas at play within current debates on children and young people's mental health issues but prompt practical strategies for intervention. I also propose that, as is usual with claims to childhood, the appeal to futurity so typically associated with children (whether utopian or – as in this case – dystopian) obscures how the well-being and distress of individual children and young people are elided with those of the nation. This achieves two powerful effects: it works to instrumentalise children and it also psychologises the socio-economic and political conditions of and for their misery. Beyond this, the appeal to futurity installs a politics of childhood that weaponises abstract but exclusionary notions of childhood and mental health *against* children, their families and communities, even precisely through the very notions of maturity and (geographical and social) mobility they presume. Instead of romanticising or fetishising or, alternatively, presuming the possibility of eliminating suffering, it is argued that we need to problematise the definitions – as well as measures and goals – of mental health and well-being. A critical psychological approach prompts the posing of different questions: Can health be 'mental'? If so, whose is it? What units of analysis are assumed, and with what consequences? Finally, rather than a psycho-temporal trajectory of adaptation to, compliance with and transcendence from the sociopolitical that underlies developmental narratives (alongside their other logical problems), mobilising postcolonial, feminist and queer theory, it is argued that discourses of futurity should be deferred or displaced in favour of current engagements and interventions, of which I identify one.

Critical Psychology, Psychologisation and Individualisation

In this section I outline some defining features of a critical psychological approach and indicate how these connect with childhood education and well-being questions.

Critical psychology and educational debates – especially those influenced by Foucault – have long discussed the rise and intensification of the 'psy complex' as part of the modern bourgeois nation state. The notion of governmentality highlights the modes of self-regulation and surveillance that citizen subjects deploy, whereby compliance with norms of conduct is felt to be done by choice rather than coercion, such that its forms of subjectivity are structured by this internalisation. The 'psy complex' (Ingleby, 1985; Rose, 1985), then, describes not only the rise of the disciplines and institutions that regulate and survey (child and citizen) subjectivities (including the school, the prison, the child guidance clinic and the mental hospital) but also how we as individuals come to mobilise such 'expertise' within our ways of thinking such that it inhabits our everyday relationships and ways of living. The structuring of modes of individualisation, therefore, comes about through psychologisation, that is, through discourses that incite us to reflect upon ourselves and our

characteristics – which have migrated beyond the domains of specialist professional knowledge to enter common sense (De Vos, 2013; Gordo Lopez & De Vos, 2010).

Policy and everyday discourse, of course, work in a cycle of mutual legitimation. This has given rise to discussions about the 'pedagogical state' (Jones, Pykett, & Whitehead, 2013; Pykett, 2012). In a UK context, this critical work evaluates the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) 'nudge unit' set up by the previous labour administration but continuing still. Such analyses highlight how the state exercises its power indirectly by prompting, or restricting, our 'choices' through environmental/ecological manipulation (or 'design'), rather than – say – by direct pronouncements or prohibitions.

Indeed debate continues over whether current so-called 'neoliberal' governmentality is qualitatively different from, or merely an extension of, existing modes of psychologisation created by advanced and advancing capitalism. But perhaps what remains uncontentious is that new resources are being recruited into its purposes, including neuroscience – as Ros Edwards and others (2015) have indicated. Jan De Vos (2013, 2015) has also noted the paradoxical character of the neuro-turn, such that it threatens to dispense with the very psyche it claims to 'explain'.

A notable aspect of contemporary advanced capitalism, however, which works in rather interesting ways with notions of childhood, is the shift in the *gendering of emotions*. As Hochschild (1983) discussed early on, as part of the shift to a knowledge economy, relational skills come to be valued as necessary tools for the new trades of the service sector (see also Burman, 2018). As an early example of this, an advertisement appeared in *The Psychologist* (the monthly professional journal) in 2002, when emotional intelligence (EI) training programmes started to make inroads into the cultural scene and were advertised extensively within the psychology professional media. It is worth recalling that the concept of EI was initially vigorously dismissed by the cognitive psychologists, on scientific grounds (of not being coherent, that we cannot abstract norms of emotional relating from contexts of practice, etc.). In fact it was only when the popularity of the term and the business/managerial as well as schooling applications came to be recognised that psychologists decided to take up the notion (see my review in Burman, 2009).

What neoliberalism has brought us is the feminisation of labour in multiple senses; that is, part-time, low-paid, precarious work is now also the condition of men's, and especially young people's, work with 'people skills' now central to current modes of labour. However, this does not mean that the gendered associations of emotional labour have disappeared: they have rather been extended and intensified. Neoliberalism brings particular modes of practice of reflexive self-management alongside both greater pressure for individual success and diminished access to a narrative of collective support and solidarity (Balibar, 2012), whether at the level of nation (i.e. cuts in the welfare state) or class/region (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). Hence responsibilisation (i.e. generating a sense of individual responsibility) arises as a result of psychologisation and individualisation, with particular consequences for the poor, and poor women in particular (Harrison, 2012).

This is the context in which social and emotional learning and well-being agendas have arisen, which, in turn, generate current discourse on children and young

people's mental health. The British Labour Administration's social and emotional learning (SEL), and then SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), while focused on whole school initiatives, nevertheless paved the way for current conservative-led initiatives – inspired by developments in the USA. These return us to the discourse of character, alongside the rise of resilience.

While character relies on very problematic and contested notions of personality traits (giving apparently scientific credence to older conservative models), resilience brings ideas generated to account for subaltern survival (of the poor, abused, etc.) into the mainstream. Combined together, they deliver a double whammy of (conservative) values plus science and help us to overlook how structural conditions producing social inequalities have been turned into individual attributes, such that social mobility is turned into a meritocratic race that the already most advantaged wins, just as worklessness turns the structural condition of unemployment into an individual trait or characteristic.

My analysis of this indicative document (Burman, 2018) highlights the relevance of the prevailing gendering of emotions, as policy discourses harden up 'soft' skills. Emotions and relationships become reformulated as 'non-cognitive', but, owing to the individualism inscribing the discourse of skills, this happens in such a way that relational, interactional features disappear. In this context, if we consider distress as a response to pressured social conditions (see, e.g. Johnstone & Boyle, 2018), it is not surprising that children and young people's well-being and mental health issues disappear from political agendas, rendered mentionable only within individual skills-based, or worse still, deficit terms (i.e. concerned with the *lack* of such skills). 'Non-cognitive skills', or relationships, have become individual and decontextualised. In other words, the dominant discourse of emotions within current social and educational policy makes emotions more cognitive. This occurs in part through assumptions structured into the models mobilised, but also through methods and evaluation paradigms.

As a result, the vulnerable, feminised, subject is now fortified through the acquisition of 'grit' and 'zest', its masculinity restored, but also that an additional rationale for *not* providing resources is supplied. Hence the only financial commitments advocated by the 2014 manifesto were to fund the development of psychometric assessment and measurement tools. What remains unproblematised within the character and resilience literature, as a key way of narrating emotions and mental health within education and social policy, is the concept of skill.[1] It is worth noting the very significant critical psychological and sociological literature on the concept of skills, which draws attention to how this conceptualisation maintains a cognitive-behavioural and politically conservative model that both reifies and abstracts activity and also commodifies it (Harris, 1987).

The re-moralisation of 'character', alongside a seemingly scientific discourse of 'resilience', is attracting much-needed critical attention (as indicated by Allen &

[1] The funding mobilised to support the evaluation of the Character and Resilience Manifesto was also cut once Nicky Morgan was removed as education secretary in July 2016.

Bull's, 2018, excellent collection). Crucially, resilience, a notion once applied to contexts/environments, becomes mobilised as a descriptor of individual qualities; it has become psychologised and individualised. While that individualisation may be undergoing some shift within current discourses of 'resilient communities' (typically used to characterise poor and minority ethnic communities and within a securitisation discourse), this nevertheless extends (rather than dispenses with) psychologisation to import collective responsibility.

Alongside other securitisation agendas, then, the discourse of character and resilience obscures the conditions giving rise to (unequal exposure to) adversity in favour of attending to individual qualities and experiences (Edwards et al., 2018). No wonder, then, that if emotions slip away from health and well-being, they return in other ways – notably as the 'crisis' in children's and young people's well-being (House of Commons, 2018).

As a further contribution, the critical psychology literature also helpfully offers resources to critique the models of positive psychology (PP) on which discourses of C&R rely. In a recent discussion, for example, Cabanas (2018) highlights the alignment of PP with neoliberal economies, its contestable scientific status and its (cultural-geographical) limits of application. That the rise of PP aligns with market economies has been widely noted as ushering in the imperative to be positive and so make things better. This not only generates responsibilised subject positions (Edwards et al., 2015) but also colonises or contains dissent (Henderson & Denny, 2015). While PP relies on well-documented correlations with individualisation (and responsibilisation), the critical psychology literature highlights how happiness may not only be overstated as a cultural goal, but that it also brings its own forms of suffering and coercion. Here Cabanas (2018) discusses the clear relationship noted between individualisation and happiness, as, for example, especially noted in Scandinavian countries which, significantly, are also those countries which have a strong welfare state. Not only is PP not as scientific as it is claimed to be, then, but its presumptions of universality also obscure the cultural-political specificities of its conditions of possibility.

What remains is a conception of emotions as either scientised or pathologised, alongside the relentless pursuit of the positive, as a key correlate of the foreclosure of systemic and structural analyses of inequality. Not only has provision been cut (in the name of 'austerity'), but those remaining institutions (such as schools) are unsurprisingly both too overstretched and ill-equipped to deal with the range of distress and disadvantage they then encounter. A recent project we conducted on the 'educational impacts of the bedroom tax' (Bragg et al., 2015), which was taken further by Hanley, Winter, and Burrell (2017), recognises schools as key (if also inadequately supported) sites for the identification and management of children's distress. As we identified in our 'bedroom tax' project, such issues occur alongside poverty being psychologised as children and young people's 'kicking off' (or behaving badly) (see Burman et al., 2017; Greenstein et al., 2016). Yet again, we can see how discourses of early intervention restigmatise the already marginalised, and, as Brown and Carr (2019) suggested in a recent review of UK mental health and educational policy, this allows the topicalisation of mental health difficulties only at

the risk of installing further regulation or governmentality. Now I turn to the second frame, childhood studies.

Childhood Studies: Disrupting the Teleology of the Spatio-temporal Frame

A founding rationale of childhood studies is to dispute and counter the instrumentalisation of children/childhood. Instead, childhood studies call for a focus on contexts and practices, so also attending to the diverse conditions that produce different kinds of children/childhoods (e.g. James, Jencks, & Prout, 1998). Childhood studies interrogate the models of childhood at play, working alongside child rights initiatives that formulate practices that support/enable children and young people's meaningful participation – in models, policy and interventions – beyond mere 'consultation'.

An approach I am calling 'child as method' can be used as an analytic tool to read axes of power constellated around and by children/childhood. This tool wards off the abstraction of child/children/childhoods from geopolitical conditions and dynamics, rather seeing this as a key route to interpret how these work (Burman 2019a, b).

Clearly, notions of the child have worked as elaborations of the prototypical colonial other, both in the sense of being colonised (by the agendas of the dominant order) and how the child has been the subject/means of colonisation or oppressing of others. But colonisation should not be reduced to the asymmetries of the generational order, even as this is also a key axis (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). Hence current calls for decolonisation not only concern liberating children from the burden of the dominant models of childhood which regulate and stigmatise them and narrate their life course. From the US context (which is where much of the character and resilience discourse originates), critical work highlights how claims and measures to protect children not only install exclusionary and discretionary models of childhood, but that these also underlie the pathologisation and criminalisation of working class, Black and gender-nonconforming adults, as well as children and young people. Erica Meiners (2016) shows how these oppressive models of childhood include even supposedly radical interventions aiming to disrupt what has been called the school-to-prison pipeline. Similarly Toby Rollo's (2018) discussion of the 'colour of childhood' highlights how Black peoples have inherited the subordination and dehumanisation of European childhood.

In terms of mental health issues, this does not mean we should not take children's experiences of distress and suffering seriously. Children and young people *are* currently under massive pressure. They are frontline fodder for the pressures of the market, of the tyranny of exposure and confession (and indeed labour) of social media. They are both living precarious lives now and contemplating precarious futures.

Clearly, we need better models of distress and well-being to help us conceptualise the processes at work, models that do not already presume the abstraction from the social and adaptation to the social that are already inscribed within current models of 'mental health' and 'mental illness'. On this point, it is worth recalling a key point that Nikolas Rose made back in 1985 (Rose, 1985) that the concept of *mental* health cannot be applied to the psychological *individual* because (unlike physical health, perhaps) there is no clear theory or model on which such a concept could be based. Thus medicalised discourses of health and, correspondingly, illness not only reinforce scientific authority but also reiterate the individualisation of responses to oppression into states, conditions, labels and diagnoses. Public health discourse has correspondingly been undermined by the individualist tenets of neoliberalism.

In such contexts, three points need to be borne in mind: First, the strategy of escalating the severity of distress mobilised by practitioners is perhaps one of the only ways to enable clients to access services whose thresholds under current cuts in provision are increasingly acute and crisis focused. While this is understandable in terms of managing to extend provision under pressured circumstances, it also produces a misleading picture of levels of distress. Moreover, second, as Ian Hacking showed so well in his discussion of looping effects (Hacking, 1995), such labelling also, of course, gives rise to subjective investments in these categories even as it may also work to provide some entitlement to resources. Third, within current contexts of cutbacks to provision, early intervention programmes may both offer an illusion of a return to supportive preventative agendas and at least provide some kind of infrastructural resources. But typically the models guiding such programmes are already shot through with classed, racialised and gendered assumptions that pathologise the poor and marginalised and blame them for their oppression.

A good example is indicated by a recent health promotion advertising campaign that was displayed in public places across the UK warning of the links between obesity and cancer. It simply said: 'OB_S__Y is a cause of cancer' (with the missing letters presumably forcing the reader to do some work that would make the message more memorable). Yet this consigns the reader and the discourse to one of individual responsibility, so overlooking how eating a healthy diet requires more financial resources, and is more time-consuming – both of which are less available to the British working classes (and here is it worth noting that the working poor are among the most deprived). But there has been some resistance, from critical psychologists, with responses appropriating and subverting the earlier campaign such as 'P_V_RTY. Guess what is a major preventable cause of early death?' signed with the logo of the British Psychological Society Psychology of Women and Equalities Section.

In this context, not only do we need to mobilise feminist arguments to resist the resolution of responsibilisation to families/communities – which all too often, for very significant reasons, resolves onto mothers – as well as to reinstate a discourse of interdependency and relationality (rather than competitive individualism). Beyond this, feminist and queer theory offers three useful resources. Firstly, it resists the mobilisation of the trope of the child as heteronormative guarantor of futurity (as Lee Edelman, 2004, proposed). In doing so, secondly, it affirms other

trajectories that deviate from such normalisations – or what Stockton (2009) called 'growing sideways'. Moreover, thirdly, the debates on queer temporalities further develop the critiques of modern time to draw attention to the ways chronological trajectories, of the kind narratively fulfilled by 'the child' or 'children', function not only biopolitically but also chrononormatively (Freeman, 2010; Halberstam, 2005).

This prompts me to move onto the third analytical frame for this chapter.

Fanon and Child as Method

I have recently been drawn to the work of Franz Fanon, as a theorist offering resources for a revolutionary psychopolitical/psychoaffective practice (Burman, 2017, 2019a, b). As both a mental health practitioner and revolutionary activist amid the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria, Fanon offered an understanding of the sources of distress as social, albeit re-wrought psychically. That is, he managed to straddle the individual/social binary to forge something else. Fanon's writings have been attracting attention for their materially grounded account of subjectivity, which attends to the particular context, history and relationships in which it emerges (Macherey, 2012), of which colonial oppression was of course his key focus.

Fanon does not appear to have worked specifically with children, although children certainly figure within his writing (as I have explored, elsewhere). However children are given atypical treatment by Fanon: (1) as being understood as agents, not merely societal cyphers ventriloquised by others – including, but not only, the famous scene in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1952/1970) where the encounter with a frightened child incites the distress and dislocation of pathologised racialisation – and (2) as sometimes not 'marked' by childhood status at all ('Letter to African youth', in Fanon, 1964/1967) (see my discussion in Burman, 2017, 2019a).

In terms of therapeutic work, it should be noted that the cases discussed in *Wretched of the Earth* (hereafter, *WE*) (Fanon, 1963), where Fanon documents the brutality of the Algerian liberation struggle, largely include very young adults, if not children. Insofar as we can tell what his therapeutic practice looked like,[2] he took into account both individual personal history and responses to this, as well as both past and current sociopolitical contexts as mobilised by the geopolitical and other institutional power relations in which the therapy takes place. He formulates an ethical-political stance that does not prescribe outcomes but prompts individual agentic empowerment (Burman, 2017, 2019a).

The more often discussed case where children appear in *WE* is the case of the two Algerian boys who had killed a European boy, their friend, because they could. 'We weren't a bit cross with him…He was a good friend of ours' (*Wretched of the*

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[2] It is relevant to note that 'B's' case in *WE* is the only account that describes a therapeutic trajectory, rather than being a telling document of damage (see Burman, 2019a, chapter 4 or Burman, 2016a, b, c).

Earth p.217). 'One day we decided to kill him because the Europeans want to kill all the Arabs. We can't kill big people. But we could kill ones like him, because he was the same age as us…' (*The Wretched of the Earth* p.217–8). In this case, it seems that Fanon had been asked to make some kind of psychiatric assessment, rather than provide therapeutic support (Gendzier, 1973). So this example stands as further testimony of the appalling brutalisation and irrationality of the war, rather than of individual, or individual children's, criminality or psychopathology.

There are resonances here with current discussions about knife crime and gangs, which preoccupy British, as well as other, contexts, alongside other arenas of war. Fanon documented and analysed the dynamics of oppression, alienation, co-option and suffering – indicated by his attention to children/childhood. What he also passionately argued for was the ways these could and would be ameliorated by changed sociopolitical and economic conditions, even as they could also be enabled by therapeutic interventions (Burman, 2016a, b, c). Without over-romanticising it, his practice linked the social and psychic: building on innovative and socially based models of (what was called) institutional psychotherapy, alongside a deeply sociopolitical appreciation of gendered, classed and cultural/religious features giving rise to distress. Hence he offered conceptualisations of the relations between psychic and social conditions that are neither socially nor individually reductionist.

Conclusion

Critical psychological accounts offer resources for reformulating the medical model of mental health. We should speak of distress or malaise, not disease. Moreover, happiness is not the point – for if we resituate the psyche within the social, how can we be content amid suffering and inequality? Perhaps to be discontent is both more rational and also offers more social relational possibilities – if only to ward off despair and anger.

A decade ago, Gill Eraut and Rebecca Whiting (2008) highlighted that:

> wellbeing has a 'holographic' quality; different meanings are being projected by different agents and what is apparently meant by the use of the term depends on where you stand. There are few fixed points or commonalities beyond 'it's a good thing'. Effectively, wellbeing acts like a cultural mirage: it looks like a solid construct, but when we approach it, it fragments or disappears. (Eraut & Whiting, 2008 p5)

Such ambiguities lend themselves to different understandings of cause and effect, even within closely related contexts. So, in her analysis of Scottish educational policy and teachers' understandings, Spratt (2016) highlighted how educators saw well-being as a prerequisite for, rather than outcome, of learning. This would seem to be a rather different model from that currently predominating in English educational policy.

Drawing on these critical perspectives, I propose that claims about well-being need to be wrested away from those who do not in fact wish us, as adults and

children, well. This involves challenging oppressive narratives of developmental trajectories that abstract children from the relational and institutional contexts that create and constrain who and how they are and subordinate these current conditions to anticipated possible futures – both utopian and dystopian. The tropes of early intervention and support for children, which both mobilise and rely upon constructions of childhood innocence, in fact exclude most children from this hallowed positioning, such that they are narrated as deficient or dangerous. Moreover, a further move occurs such that, paradoxically (as childhood theorists have pointed out), children are also thereby excluded from politics – only appearing as its victims rather than agents.

Given the function and form of current discourses around child mental health, there will always be tensions between attending to children and to their others, the other parties and constituencies constructed and produced in relation to children (i.e. families, parents, schools). But two main problems arise from the work of temporal and spatial abstraction done 'in the name of the child', which further the individualisation of explanations for distress rather than situating the latter within the social conditions producing it. Saving the future (child) from the current (child/family) suffers from a developmental fallacy that reads back onto earlier conditions anxieties about later events that may never happen, or, if they do, could occur for reasons that have little or nothing to do with the earlier experiences.

There are critical resources for warding off these problematic and dangerous narratives about children and mental health. Firstly, we can deconstruct the so-called crisis in child mental health – to argue how the discourse of 'crisis' is (a) in fact nothing new, while (b) 'crisis' is a code word for the advancement of the interests of neocolonial, multinational capital and how this (c) occludes how poverty and welfare cuts are what give rise to the current escalation of difficulties (see, e.g. Kapartziani & Papathanasiou, 2016; Khiabany, 2016).

Secondly, it is important to situate what is happening at local and national levels as part of a much wider picture: global mental health is big business (as Mills, 2013; and Klein & Mills, 2017, document). This also invites a decolonisation of 'child mental health' from both the oppressive abstractions attending the focus on 'child' and the current political economy of the 'mental health' industry with its tie ups between the World Health Organization and the International Monetary Fund. The now familiar elision between child, individual and national (economic) (mental) health renders children merely as future capital, the (economic) 'wealth' of the nation, rather than attending to current concerns and conditions of children's lives as legitimate questions of entitlement in their own right.

Thirdly, on a final positive note, workers across various (health, social care, educational) sectors are increasingly collectively agitating about the impossibility of current levels of provision (giving rise to labour union agitation and mobilisation in even the most unregulated sectors, such as food delivery companies, as well as across global companies – as in the recent walkouts by Google employees protesting about gender discrimination in November 2018). In the UK, psychological practitioners are also exploring alternative models, that refuse diagnosis and that situate distress within sociopolitical conditions. *The Power Threat Meaning Framework*

(Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) has been put forward by some British clinical psychologists, but this approach is one that insists on attending to the meanings accorded to distress by the sufferer and on understanding their difficulties as responses to oppression and inequalities that are institutional and structural as well as interpersonal.

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Chapter 8
Psychology and Psychologies 'from the Language End': Critical Reflections

Peter E. Jones

Abstract This chapter emphasizes the intimate interdependence of perspectives on linguistic communication and perspectives on mental powers within psychological theory and gives a critical overview of conceptions of language and communication which are either proclaimed or assumed in cultural-historical and critical psychological traditions. Focussing in detail on Vygotskian psychology as an illustration, the chapter argues that key psychological principles within the cultural-historical tradition (mediation, internalization, conceptual development, meaning and sense) betray the influence of mechanistic and decontextualizing perspectives on semiotic and linguistic activity. The chapter argues for an 'actional-integrative' approach to sign-making and examines the implications of adopting such a standpoint for a re-evaluation and reorientation of cultural and critical psychology.

> The source of social behavior and consciousness also lies in speech in the broad sense of the word (Vygotsky, 1987: 42).[1]

> That Russians have tended to profess a near-religious, if not indeed fetishistic, veneration for the power of language – for the Word – is well known, as are the particularly intense declarations of that veneration which appeared in the first part of the twentieth century (Seifrid, 2005: 1).

Introduction

A human life is a communicative life. The collective endeavours in and through which the fabric of our personal lives and identities is woven (or unravelled) require a dynamic, perpetually renewed coordination and integration of individual efforts that can only be achieved communicationally, 'mainly by means of signs of various

[1] From Vygotsky's 1926 paper, 'The methods of reflexological and psychological demonstration'.

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kinds' (Harris, 1996: 68). Communication, then, 'is not something additional to or separable from the rest of human life and the constantly changing circumstances that it presents, but an integrated part of it' (Harris, 1996: 13).

Since sociality is communicationally accomplished, our views of communication – of these 'signs of various kinds' – and of the organizing values or functions which we create in their making must inform our views about everything else that we are and do. Hence, our conceptions of social organization (including social institutions and social class), of the relationship between individual and collective action, of the mind, of learning, of reason and rationality and of human potential more generally, presuppose or imply particular perspectives on the communicational activities and relations in which such human capacities, whether we call them 'social' or 'psychological', are developed. Conversely, any view of our communicational powers itself projects assumptions about the psychological capacities which such powers presuppose, display and develop as well as the forms of social organization and interpersonal relations on which they depend and to which they contribute: a psychology and a sociology are already implicit in the model of signification which informs the way we account for those aspects of human conduct referred to as 'social' or 'psychological'.

In short, all psychological theories and approaches are underpinned by general conceptions (more or less explicit) of communication. This is not simply a question of how psychological or sociological notions are articulated with respect to a view of communication more broadly or of language more narrowly, but the very identification of and distinction between 'social' and 'psychological' and their relationship. Different views of communication and of the communicational proficiencies exercised in particular episodes (and sequences of episodes) enable or imply quite different views of sociality and, therefore, of socio-historical development and, not least, the potential for social change and transformation. No attempt to construct a 'critical psychology', or a 'cultural-historical' psychology, can afford to ignore this lesson. This is particularly important, as we shall see, in the case of Vygotskian psychology where a particular conception of *the social becoming the psychological* defines the fundamental problematic for the whole theory.

It is this intimate interdependence between conceptions of the 'psychological' and the 'social' on the one hand and conceptions of communication on the other that constitutes the general theme for this chapter and forms the context for the specific argument to be developed. To approach psychologies 'from the language end', then, is to acknowledge, first and foremost, the dependence of psychological constructs on communicational conceptions and the view of the social which such conceptions presuppose and, secondly, to insist that all such communicational conceptions stand in need of critical interrogation and challenge for the view of the social which they assume or promote.

In that light, my particular focus will be on the general problem of how sociality appears in the key linguistic and communicational constructs and methods with which Vygotsky built his psychological theory, with some specific attention given to the notion of 'internalization'. There is particular value in approaching Vygotsky's psychology from the language end because no psychological theory is more

explicitly dependent on ideas about language and communication (Jones, 2007, 2019; in press). Vygotsky's theory is built from the ground up around particular conceptions of speech, writing, word, word meaning, sense, sign, signification, the pointing gesture and the command – to name the most obvious and important linguistic and communicational constructs in Vygotsky's work – and on the dynamic semiological processes of mediation and internalization which such constructs enable. My aim is not so much to attempt a systematic rebuttal, from a communicational perspective, of the psychological principles motivating the hotly disputed conception of 'internalization' (or 'vrashchivanie') (see Yasnitsky, 2019) as to further open up for scholarly reflection the very fact that these principles have a communicational design which is profoundly contestable and, indeed, are a current subject of lively debate (Hauser, 2015; Jones, 2009; Kellogg, 2019; Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2018; Steinbach Kohler & Thorne, 2011; Yasnitsky, 2019).[2] But before we turn directly to this particular issue and its ramifications, let us examine what is at stake more generally in the relationship between communication and society.

Linguistics and Sociality

This fundamental link between semiological, psychological and sociological conceptions and commitments was noted in Harris's critical account of the social theory implicit in the linguistic structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure:

> The basic questions the *Cours* deals with are questions which will arise wherever a discipline is concerned with elucidating the mechanisms by which the individual and the collectivity are mysteriously united in social interaction. (1987: 236)

Saussure's elucidation, Harris argues, took him along one particular path through the spaghetti jungle of possible directions of travel:

> Durkheim, like Saussure, sees both languages and currencies as obvious examples of social systems which cannot be explained in terms of a fortunate conformity between individual practices. 'The system of signs I use to express my thought, the system of currency I use to pay my debts, the instruments of credit I use in my commercial relations, the practices followed in my profession, etc., function independently of my own use of them. And these statements can be repeated for each member of society. Here, then, are ways of acting, thinking and feeling that present the noteworthy property of existing outside the individual consciousness'. (Harris, 1987: 226)

As a consequence, Saussure's approach to 'linguistic facts' was premised on the 'autonomy of the sign vis-a-vis its users and its uses' Harris (1996: 6). Such a view of language in turn has profound implications for thinking about 'the social' more

[2] My own theoretical allegiance is principally to the 'integrationist' school developed by Roy Harris and colleagues. For an overview of the integrationist perspective (and its relationship to 'segregationism'), see the Preface and Chapter 1 of Harris (1996). I have attempted to explore the implications of integrationism for Vygotskian theory, and for the internalization conception in particular, in Jones. (2007, 2009, 2011, in press)

generally. Firstly, it projects a clean-cut separation – 'segregation' in Harris's (1996) terms – of an apparent domain of sui generis linguistic 'facts' and principles from all other aspects of social conduct. Furthermore, it licences a view of human sociality itself as founded on such a self-contained system of allegedly shared meanings (or values) rather than as the dynamic, concrete forms of active interaction and interconnection between individuals. Cognition, by the same token, appears as the inculcation and use of a pre-established store of 'shared meanings' which define and delimit what can be meant, rather than seeing thinking as an integral dimension of the creative flow of activity in context. So viewed, language comes to centre stage to play the main fiddle in the orchestration of a distinctively human mode of life. Tim Ingold (2018, Chapter 4) has recently described the impact of Saussurean linguistic structuralism on the conception of sociality in influential traditions of anthropology. But one can also see how this particular semiological view has made its mark on accounts of sociality and human development within sociocultural or (post-Vygotskian) cultural-historical tradition:

> All children are born into a culturally organized community, where people live and work together and communicate their experiences to each other. All transactions in this world are contingent on the individuals' ability to participate in a collective body of knowledge that informs them of how events should be interpreted, what value judgments accompany certain actions, and what the natural texture of everyday life is. *These modes of interpretation are common to all members of a culture. If we transfer our attention from considering the world of nature to that of relationships and social activities, we find ample confirmation that, for example, no object exists that does not presuppose a common interpretation.* (Perinat and Sadurni 1999: 54, my emphasis)

Erica Burman's work (e.g. 2016) has perhaps drawn in sharpest outline the socio-historical development and ideological significance of the web of interconnected assumptions and positions on sociality and language in the history of developmental psychology more generally. In a striking passage, Burman draws attention to the fundamental significance for psychological theory, and intellectual culture more generally, of the analyst/observer's interpretations of children's communicational behaviours at the smallest scale and the implications, consequently, of the vulnerability and instability of such interpretations:

> Developmental psychology both partakes of and informs cultural representations of the origins and nature of social organisation that are recycled within models of social development. But just as it is by no means clear that we can determine if a baby's cry or smile has meaning, and, even if it has, that this is not fixed or shared except by historical and cultural convention, so significations of children, including what childhood is and what meaning this holds, are by no means as stable and homogeneous as has been assumed. (2016: 65)

Nowhere have the consequences of analytical methodologies applied to communicational conduct been so clearly challenged as in the British sociologist and ethnomethodologist Anthony Wootton's critique of the use of linguistic and discourse frameworks and models in the creation of particular sociological theories and methods (Wootton, 1975). In his remarkable, and underrated, little book published more than 40 years ago, Wootton undertook a critical examination of the role of linguistic 'data', in addition to overt theorizing of language, in a variety of sociological

approaches. Wootton was specifically concerned to explore sociology's investment in, and consequent dependence on, linguistic theory and analysis and, more specifically, to examine the methods of language-based investigation which sociologists put to use in establishing or validating sociological 'facts' or general propositions about social processes. 'Sociology', as he puts it, 'is intimately concerned with the study of what people say' (1975: 13). He goes on:

> Much time is spent in methodology courses discussing the ways in which what people say can be transformed into data, how the context in which a question is being asked influences a person's response, and so on. After some consideration of such issues it soon becomes clear that handling responses and deciding on the status they can be assigned is no easy matter. (1975: 13)

In order to illustrate and probe the problematic nature of this kind of procedure, Wootton examines a range of sociological approaches for which linguistic 'data' and its interpretation are fundamental and which have drawn on particular kinds of explicit linguistic theorizing as support. His careful investigation does not make easy reading for anyone who believes that 'social reality' readily and reliably surrenders itself to methods of linguistic sampling, coding, interpretation or indeed any descriptive or analytic procedure which would allow the sociological researcher to pronounce with confidence on what the participants in such and such an event 'really mean', or what they are up to. Nevertheless, the history of psychology, and of sociology, not to mention the history of operationalizing psychological/sociological concepts and frameworks for educational theory and practice, is a continuous stream of confident pronouncements on what this child 'said' and 'meant', from the perspective of some theoretical frame or other (see Jones, 2013).[3] The lesson of Wootton's study is that what may be uncritically presented as 'analysis' of language 'data' is not a representation of linguistic 'facts' but *is itself*, first and foremost, a communicational practice with its own, often unexamined, assumptions, agendas and blind spots (Jones, 2017).

Vygotsky, Language and the Social

The linguistic and communicational infrastructure of Vygotsky's evolving psychological theorizing has remained relatively free from serious critical attention, despite the voluminous ongoing work of exposition and critical analysis of the semiotically grounded concept of *perezhivanie* in the context of a more general consideration of 'subjectivity' (e.g. González Rey, Mitjáns Martínez, & Goulart, 2019; and cf. Jones, 2019). This is not an issue which exclusively affects Vygotsky's work, of course, but extends to the work of other cultural-historical and activity theory psychologists

[3] In his later work, in which he attempts to account for his daughter's linguistic development, Wootton also brings his critical insights to bear on Vygotsky's theory (see Wootton, 1997, 2006; and cf Lerner, Zimmerman, & Kidwell, 2011).

and contributors, including A N Leont'ev, Luria, Galperin, Bozhovich and A A Leontiev, as well as to the work of other influential theorists in the post-revolutionary period, notably S L Rubinshtein whose own work on language, on significant points at odds with Vygotsky (Jones, 2002), cries out for scholarly examination. Luria's output is particularly intriguing for the depth of his engagement with contemporary linguistic theory in the Chomskyan age (see Jones, 2018c). Nonetheless, Vygotsky's psychology was distinctive in being grounded on a particular account of those 'signs of various kinds' through which social life was thought to be organized and coordinated. For that reason, it is vital to examine critically the qualities Vygotsky attributes to signs as organizational tools or, putting it another way, the conception of the signifying *power* that words and other signs must possess in order to forge the interpersonal links which social organization presupposes and requires.

In terms of the general sociological commitments which Vygotsky professed, his psychological work is most often painted – by advocates and critics alike – as having its inspiration, intellectual roots and principal concepts and methods in Marx's work. While I believe the relationship between Marx and Vygotsky is problematic (Jones, 2019), there is no doubt that Vygotsky placed the social bond – 'the mechanisms by which the individual and the collectivity are mysteriously united in social interaction' (Harris, 1987, cited above) – at the very heart of his theory and as the key to its semiologically informed principles. And therein lies the rub.

What is at stake appears in particularly acute shape in different authors' accounts of internalization in Vygotsky. Thus, in what is a typical account, internalization is at once 'primarily concerned with social processes', as Wertsch and Stone (1985: 163) put it, while at the same time is rooted in (or constituted by) 'the semiotic mechanisms, especially language, that mediate social and individual functioning' (1985: 163–4). In sum:

> The overall developmental scheme begins with external social activity and ends with internal individual activity. *Vygotsky's account of semiotic mechanisms provide (*sic*) the bridge that connects the external with the internal and the social with the individual*. (my emphasis)

In an earlier account, again fairly typical, of the speech internalization position, Wertsch (1979: 90) expands further on aspects of the semiological assumptions in play:

> During the time before the child begins to use private speech for self-regulation, we can say that in most cases *independent behaviour appearing to be directed toward a goal, does not really constitute an action whose goal requires an abstract representation*. The behaviour is guided by phenomena in the physical environment, which attract the child's attention...*Behavioural sequences, which may appear to be actions, are either guided by other-regulation or by object-regulation, rather than self-regulation*. With the appearance of private speech, the child has a means for representing goals. This representation eventually will be independent of any perceptually present phenomena and therefore provides the means for focusing on an abstract goal and ignoring perceptually salient, but task irrelevant, aspects of the environment. (Wertsch, 1979: 90, my emphasis)

Such accounts have the merit, at least, of vividly depicting the problem area in focus: the intimate connection between conceptions of language and communication on the one hand and a conception of sociality on the other. More particularly, we note the primacy of speech in this whole process whose distinctive role, so conceived, is to enable the 'self-regulation' necessary for independent planning and action of the child whose behaviour is initially purely *reactive* – in thrall to the play of natural forces in the immediate environment or under the direct control and command of other people.

In more recent accounts, some scholars have cast Vygotsky's semiological conception of sociality more squarely in terms of active cooperation and collaboration between child and adult (cf Arievich & Stetsenko, 2014; Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2018; Stetsenko, 2005), thereby seeking to build on the dynamic interactionist and transactional view of sociality which Marx himself espoused (Jones, 2018a). From that point of view, there is no reason to quibble with the penetrating and undeniably uplifting reading of the originality and inspirational character of Vygotsky's work and its significance in the broader context of the intellectual history of the twentieth century that Sawyer and Stetsenko (2018: 148) propose:

> In sum, Vygotsky makes a radical step in charting a new path for understanding how the human mind – including language – emerges within, and out of, collaborative historical practices. These practices are instantiated in socially interactive joint activities starting from simple forms such as adult-child interactions. These interactions, though seemingly mundane and philosophically unsophisticated, are meaningful and highly organized endeavors that are based in cultural rules and norms, mediated by social artifacts, and arranged based on complex principles. As such, adult-child social interactions are enactments of the broad sociocultural practice of parenting on one pole of the process, and of growing up as a child on the other. In drawing on the notion of collaborative social practice – extending through history and saturated with cumulative communal achievements – as the driving source of development, Vygotsky is unique in the history of psychology.

Let us note, however, that such terms as 'interaction' and 'collaboration' imply a communicational perspective, indeed one which the authors develop in some detail in their rebuttal of particular criticisms in Jones (2009) of Vygotsky's conception of internalization. The issue, then, is whether this positive and apparently unexceptional discourse obscures what may yet be fundamental disagreements and incompatible perspectives on the communicational means and powers in and through which interaction and collaboration are enabled and achieved (cf Wootton, 1997), with all the consequences of such differences in perspective for the plausibility of the account at a more fundamental level and, not least, its implications for thinking about social life and its transformational potential.

The whole area remains as controversial as it is central to Vygotskian theory. It is important, therefore, to consider the reasons why Vygotsky adopted an 'internalization' perspective and, more to the point, to examine the semiological/communicational processes which he took to be constitutive of the developmental journey that internalization involved. In that light let us examine the origins and rationale for the internalization position in Vygotsky's work.

The Problem of Internalization

At the heart of Vygotsky's psychological theorizing is an original, and intriguing, proposal according to which individual psychological/mental functions (of a supposed 'higher' category) are derivative of forms and modes of social interaction and communication. This gives us a picture of the social *becoming* the psychological: 'All higher psychological functions are the essence of internalized [*interiorizovanniye*] relations of a social order, a basis for the social structure of the individual' (1997a: 106).[4] Similarly, 'we might say that all higher functions were formed not in biology, not in the history of pure phylogenesis, but that the mechanism itself that is the basis of higher mental functions is *a copy* [*slepok*] *from the social*' (1997a: 106, my emphasis).

But how is the social itself conceived? More specifically, what is Vygotsky's view of the communicational basis of the collaborative and cooperative relations constituting sociality? In truth, Vygotsky rarely addressed specifically and explicitly the character of the communicational-collaborative bonds or processes through which human social activity and social organization were collectively forged and reproduced. But in those passages where such issues are raised, we find clear indications of Vygotsky's allegiance to particular communicational assumptions about sociality. In such passages, as below from work written around 1929–1930, we see the clear influence of the then dominant mechanistic reflexological perspectives projected onto a wider social and historical canvass in the shape of 'a new regulatory principle of behavior' (1997a: 56, 2005: 288) to be located in 'the social determination of behaviour [*v sotsial'noi determinatsii povedeniya*] carried out with the aid of signs':

> Social life creates the need to subject the behavior of the individual to social requirements and together with this, creates complex signalization [*signalizatsionniye*] systems, means of communication [*svyazi*, 'connections'] that guide and regulate the development of conditioned connections [*svyazei*] in the brain of each person. The organization of higher nervous activity creates the necessary prerequisites, creates the possibility of external [*izvne*] regulation of behavior. (1997a: 56)

In similar vein:

> In this way man created a signalization apparatus, a system of artificial conditioned stimuli by means of which he creates any artificial connections and elicits the necessary reactions of the organism. If, following Pavlov, we compare the cortex of the cerebral hemispheres with an immense signal board, then we might say that man created the key to that board – the grandiose signalistics [*signalistiky*] of speech. (1997a: 57)

[4] My practice here will be to include [*in square brackets*] the original Russian terms (from Vygotsky, 2005) when they are particularly important to the discussion. In this particular case, a better translation of the passage in question might run something like this: 'All higher mental functions are interiorized relations of a social type, the foundation of the social structure of the individual personality' (2005: 356).

In reflecting on the significance of such passages, we see that Vygotsky himself understood that any attempt to develop a sociogenetic approach to individual psychological development had to reckon with the kind of communicational organization that collective social life presupposes (and requires) and on which the personal development of individual members of historically established communities necessarily depends. That the distinctive character of human social organization was a communicational accomplishment (rather than impelled by natural instincts or innate cognitive powers) was a striking, and surely highly productive, premise for investigation of the development of such psychological powers as communal identity and participation involved. On the other hand, there is no attempt in Vygotsky's work, even in broad outline, to explore the concrete dynamic of any particular socially organized activity and its communicational infrastructure or, more to the point, to challenge the crude reflexologically inspired vision of 'signalized' sociality set out so confidently in the above passages. The reason for this neglect appears, in effect, to be the assumption that the distinctive organization of social activity *is due to, and follows from, the properties and powers of the symbolic constructs themselves* and, therefore, that an account of the organizing principles and structuring of social activity would flow more or less directly from an account of the 'signs of various kinds', notably linguistic signs, which organize and regulate this activity. In other words, from the observation that human social life was semiologically organized, it appeared that the very source and ground of sociality itself was to be sought in the power of signs to *control and direct behaviour* 'from the outside' (Jones, 2019), a 'regulating' power which, in Vygotsky's earlier work at least, was accounted for by reflexological principles.

Indeed, it is this agenda of behavioural control ('regulation') by signs which is the motivating agenda for the whole cultural-historical paradigm. 'The process of work' as Vygotsky and Luria put it, 'requires man to exercise a certain degree of control over his own behaviour' (1993: 34). They go on:

> *Once symbols enabling man to control his own behavioural processes* had been invented and were in use, the history of the development of behaviour became transformed, to a large extent, into the history of the development of those auxiliary artificial 'means of behaviour', and the history of man's control over his own behavior. (1993: 35; my emphasis)

Here, then, we see two interdependent moves. In the first, signs (linguistic signs in particular) are conceived of as means of 'social' control of behaviour (i.e. control by 'the Other') and, as such, the principal enablers of socially organized human labour. In the second, signs are seen to exercise such control either through their impelling power as artificially created stimuli or via the 'inner' side of the word-sign, their generalizing power as abstract concepts.[5] If we do not understand both these moves, and their constant reformulation and development in Vygotsky's thinking, it is impossible to fully grasp the source of the internalization conception as well as its fundamental problems and contradictions.

[5] For more discussion of these two conceptions of the verbal sign – the 'causal-mechanical sign' and the 'abstract scholastic sign' – see Jones (in press).

Note, for instance, how Benjamin Lee's influential account of the Vygotskian perspective makes precisely this equation between the sociality distinctive to human life and the enabling power of linguistic signs (through their 'generalizing' power):

> Language, as a historically determined social institution, is the means through which society converts the principles of cognitive development from biological to social dialectical. (1985: 75)

Lee explains:

Earlier development is of the type Piaget would later call 'sensorimotor', where the development of thought is governed primarily by biological factors and simple reflex learning. When the child learns to speak, however, he is acquiring a system of signs, which, like any social institution, develops according to sociohistorical principles of dialectical materialism. (1985: 75).He goes on:

> Human labour differs from animal tool use because humans are aware of and plan their actions using historically transmitted and socially created means of production. This awareness and planning ability is a form of generalization made possible only through speech. (1985: 75)

In fact, from his first contributions to psychological debate, written as a passionate advocate of reflexology, Vygotsky had seen spoken words, with their power to stimulate and control behaviour, as the key to *both* human sociality *and* individual selfhood. 'The source of social behavior and consciousness', as he put it (1987: 42), 'lies in speech', where 'speech' itself is 'a system of reflexes of social contact and, on the other hand, primarily a system of reflexes of consciousness, i.e., for the reflection of the influence of other systems' (1987: 42). On that basis, Vygotsky declared: 'The mechanism of social behaviour and the mechanism of consciousness is one and the same' (1987: 42). As he explained at greater length:

> We are conscious of ourselves because we are conscious of others, and by the same method by which we are conscious of others, because we are the same vis-à-vis ourselves as others vis-à-vis us. We are conscious of ourselves only to the extent that we are *another* to ourselves, i.e., to the extent that we can again perceive our own reflexes as stimuli. There is in principle no difference in mechanism whatsoever between the fact that I can repeat aloud a word spoken silently and the fact that I can repeat a word spoken by another: both are reversible reflex-stimuli. (1987: 42)

Consequently, the origins and motivating principles of the whole internalization conception remain here. Though these principles would later be couched in the interactional-collaborative (and semantic) terms that Vygotsky would find more adequate, the communicational basis and rationale for the distinctive orientation of his sociogenetic perspective lie in the reflexologically inspired conception of social organization.

The problem can perhaps be seen at its clearest in the significance which Vygotsky attributes to the 'command' and its place in the overall sociogenetic journey. Vygotsky took over his picture of the communicative function of the command and its role in self-regulation from Pierre Janet (cf van der Veer & Valsiner, 1988), whose 'method of research …is completely self-evident from the point of view of the history of cultural development of the child'. In particular:

> According to Janet, the word [*slovo*] was initially a command [*komandoi*] for others … According to Janet, the word is always a command and consequently it is the basic means of controlling [*ovladeniya*] behaviour. (Vygotsky, 1997a: 103; 2005: 352)

Janet's view was that 'the power of the word over mental functions is based on the real power of the superior over the subordinate' (1997a: 104) with respect to the social relations involved in the division of labour:

> If we consider the initial forms of work activity, then we see that the function of fulfilling and the function of directing are separated there. An important step in the evolution of work is the following: what the supervisor does and what the underling does is united in one person. This, as we shall see below, is the basic mechanism of voluntary attention and work. (1997a: 104)

The crucial point to note, however, is that this social relationship of subordination of supervisor to underling is conceived semiologically as a power that the verbal command has to automatically elicit or evoke the relevant response. The self-regulation of behaviour by the individual is consequently explained as a result of the internalization of this coercive or compelling means of interpersonal regulation:

> Regulating another's behavior by means of the word leads gradually to the development of verbalized [*verbalizovannogo*] behavior of the individual himself. (1997a: 104, 2005: 353)

In other words, the view of language as a means of 'self-regulation' is constructed on the same reflexological semiology we have already examined. Here, Sawyer and Stetsenko's (2018: 150) commentary, though ultimately supportive of Vygotsky's sociogenetic orientation, is instructive:

> One of the core implications of the inconsistencies and gaps in Vygotsky's approach is that society came to be viewed, contra explicit warnings by Marx, as a force outside the individual that merely exerts influences on people – be it in the form of constraints, mediations, or affordances for acting. In this way, human development is thought to be explained by Vygotsky as driven by socio-cultural factors that exist prior to and independently of individuals, and which are imposed on individuals in top-down fashion. This position suggests that 'culture and meanings are on the external plane and must be internalized by the child; they cannot be created by the child' (Lerman). From this it follows that individuals are passive recipients of cultural forces with little role other than to acquire and internalize (or, in another terminology, appropriate) outside influences.

The authors comment: 'Whether such a top-down understanding of human development is present in Vygotsky's works or is a result of misinterpretations is a complicated question, *the answer to which is likely both*' (my emphasis).

In this connection, the accounts of Vygotskian theory given by Alexander Luria, Vygotsky's principal collaborator in the development of cultural-historical psychology, are particularly telling with regard to the language-centric social determinism of the internalization perspective. Luria argued:

> Vygotsky pointed out that initially the voluntary act is shared by two people. It begins with the verbal command of the mother and ends with the child's act. It is only at the next stage of development that the child learns to speak and can begin to give spoken commands to himself/herself. This occurs first externally, in the form of overt speech, and later internally, through inner speech. (1982: 88)

In effect, the adoption of the reflexological frame of Pavlov and others, with its assumptions about scientificity, objectivity and materialistic ‘monism’ (Veresov, 1999), set peculiarly rigid constraints on how any behaviour – including linguistic behaviour – could be acceptably read and interpreted. The self-imposed monochromatic reductionism of reflexology’s own interpretative lens blotted out the interpretative powers of the subjects or agents of communicative action and forced an objective, causal reading onto the play of ethical considerations and creative exercise of communicational intelligence involved in commanding, guiding and self-guiding. At the same time, the communicational terms which it presupposed were premised on a prior categorical distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ psychological capacities which was necessary to render reflexological conceptions relevant to – indeed fundamental for – subsequent cultural-psychological development. As Vygotsky put it in his *Educational Psychology* (1997b: xvii):

> The study of conditional reflexes constitutes a foundation on which the new psychology will have to be constructed. The term, conditional reflex, is the name given to that mechanism which carries us from biology to sociology and makes it possible to comprehend the very essence and nature of the educational process.

In effect, then, a view of the primacy of the social bond, itself seen initially through reflexological spectacles, was to become the substance of individual development via internalization. The entire explanation had a hole at the centre, as Chris Sinha explained, in an early critique:

> If the individual cognitive subject is seen as being an internalised product of social life and organization, and not a product of biology, then what is the nature of the subject (or proto-subject) which is initially responsible for the act(s) of internalization? To say that this is itself biological is simply to push the problem down a level, for the capacity to become ‘fully human’ is also a uniquely human characteristic... despite its interactionist and dialectical impulses, the Vygotskyan theory of internalization reproduces in its internal logic the very divisions between the natural and the cultural, and the individual and the social, which it strives to overcome. (in Wootton, 1997: 194–5)

Just as Pavlov could take the physical environment for granted as the source of signal stimuli for conditioned reflexes in the animal, so Vygotsky could take the social environment, notably the established communicational powers and identities of adult members, as the ‘external’/‘social’ matrix for the formation of the child’s ‘self-regulatory’ abilities and inner self. But the social bond, as Janet’s account of ‘the command’ displays most vividly, had already been psychologized by modelling social interaction in the image of reflexological automaticity. Consequently, if the relationship between the individual and the social was presented as an interaction – or form of collaboration – the very conception of interaction/collaboration itself was tightly drawn around the frame of social relating which that communicational model allowed. In that sense, given Vygotsky’s assumptions and premises about the nature of human sociality, its ‘natural’ foundations and the leading role of speech in the sociogenetic process, the internalization principle – from ‘other-regulation’ to ‘self-regulation’ – and the associated ‘genetic law of cultural development’ were the

only game in town, the only possible way to articulate the connection between social organization, so conceived, and the conscious action and inner world of the individual subject.

At the same time, it is crucial to note that Vygotsky, in the course of developing the key principles of his new 'cultural-historical' approach, undertook a critical reappraisal of reflex principles and rejected reflexology as a total account of human behaviour and its controlling semiological mechanisms. His most detailed engagement with the issue was in his 'Tool and sign in child development' (in Vygotsky, 1984/1999) and in his *History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions* (Vygotsky, 1997a). The former work – despite all the problems in its genesis, textual integrity and interpretation (Yasnitsky & van der Veer, 2016) – provides the most profound reworking of all problems to do with the relationship between linguistic communication, thinking and action and deserves detailed critical treatment for which there is no room here.[6] It also includes a lengthy passage in which Vygotsky attempts to settle accounts with the reflexological method in developing his own distinctive approach. Vygotsky's critique revolves around three main points. Firstly, while reflex theory 'was adequate' in 'the study of simple reflex acts', it was inadequate for 'bringing out those hidden mental mechanisms which facilitate complex mental reactions' (1999: 58). Secondly, the method was 'antigenetic', incapable of understanding 'the appearance of qualitatively new formations and manifestation of mental function in essentially new interrelations' (1999: 58). And thirdly, the method was incapable of capturing the distinctive character of the 'higher mental functions', 'what distinguishes them from elementary systems'.

Vygotsky outlined his alternative approach in the following way:

> In our studies, we proceeded differently. Studying the development of the child, we established that development proceeds along a path of profound change of the structure of child behavior itself and that at each new stage, the child not only changes the form of reaction, but also carries it out differently to a significant degree, using new means of behavior and replacing some mental functions with others. A long-term analysis allowed us to establish that development proceeds mainly in the direction of mediating the psychological operations that at the first stages were accomplished by direct forms of adaptation. (1999: 58)

In Vygotsky's terms, the mental process is thereby 'reconstructed': 'the essential mechanism of such reconstruction is the creation and use of a number of artificial stimuli that play an auxiliary role and allow man to control his own behavior first from outside and later by complex internal operations' (1999: 58–59).

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[6] Indeed, Vygotsky here pushes even further at the very limits of his own semiological-psychological assumptions by addressing the fundamental inadequacy of the associationistic psychology intrinsic to reflexology with respect to the guiding role of communicational processes in purposeful activity (see Jones, in preparation). Similarly, the brilliant and pioneering work that Vygotsky undertook in relation to the communicational organization of practical activity and the planning function of speech involved a novel conception of linguistic and communicational processes which deserves critical attention as well as admiration for its boldness (Jones, 2002, 2017, in preparation).

Note, then, that the reflex, with its entirely *reactive* orientation (the 'reactive mechanism'), is not rejected per se. Vygotsky's approach, rather, is to propose ways in which that 'reactive mechanism' (taken to be the common semiological foundation of human and animal behaviour and learning) can be animated and vehicled in the developmental composition of 'higher' mental capacities and functions. Vygotsky's critique, then, falls far short of a repudiation of reflexological semiology, and the conception of the natural-cultural divide on which this semiology depends, leaving him with the gross explanatory arc with which he began: the process of linguistic internalization as key to the *active and purposeful* character of higher mental functions peculiar to human beings. Furthermore, when Vygotsky began to consider the *meaning* of signs as well as their causal effect on subsequent behaviour, the language-centred symbolic control agenda was maintained: now the general meanings or concepts that words purportedly embodied were taken as necessary prior formulations (as per the account in Wertsch, 1979 above) of intended action ('the planning function of speech'). In this case, too, a vulgar 'materialist' assumption about the representational relationship between concepts and reality forced a view of a developmental ladder from concrete complexes to abstract verbal concepts (Jones, 2016, 2019).

A straightforward rejection of reflexology would have needed a clear position statement: communicational interaction is not accountable for in causal-mechanical terms at all. On that basis, the conditional reflex conception would have been entirely ruled out as an account of communicational interaction, not to mention as a guiding philosophy for the treatment of human sociality more generally. More specifically, this would have involved abandoning the treatment of the 'command' in terms of a psychophysiological automatism and the recognition that there is simply no *objective* grounding or connection to be found between the (issuance of) what we might take to be a 'commanding' or 'ordering' utterance on the one hand and any subsequent responsive understanding or action. In short, just as linguistic interaction cannot be captured by reflexological models or their analogies or metaphorical extensions, observed regularities or conformities in social behaviour cannot be accounted for in terms of properties or powers seemingly possessed by words or other signs (Jones, 2009; Harvey, 2015). To get beyond the internalization conception, therefore, one must challenge both sides of Vygotsky's theoretical account: his view of sociality and his view of communication in general and linguistic communication in particular. Where should such a challenge begin and what would it bring?

The distinctive characteristic of Vygotskyan psychology, as we have seen, lies in the role attributed to signs as controllers or regulators of socially organized activity and as 'self-regulators' for individual voluntary action. But there is a paradox here which plays out in a number of ways. Firstly, if signs are responsible for social organization, then how are we to explain *the social organization of sign-making activity itself*? For, as Charles Goodwin noted: 'in the human sciences language has typically been analysed almost exclusively as a symbolic system rather than a form of social organization in its own right' (2002: 18). The point, then, is not simply that acts of communication cannot be understood independently of the social activities and relations into which they are integrated and to which they contribute, but that

communicational (including linguistic) *interaction* is itself *socially organized, fundamentally cooperative activity*. In other words, one cannot account for social organization by the power of speech since speech itself *is* collaborative activity requiring communicationally enabled social action and organization. This paradox of cultural-historical psychology was disguised in effect by a prior psychologizing of verbal utterances and their social embeddedness, notably in the pivotal case of the 'command'. Secondly, the social organization of the space of interaction itself went unnoticed and the interpersonal and ethical complexities of the communicational relations in play in verbal interaction were removed at a stroke by their reduction to the action of an automatic, 'objective' compelling power somehow contained in the verbal instruction itself. After all, if linguistic communication is raised to the status of explanatory principle or source of the general psychological capacity for voluntary action, or 'free action' in Vygotsky's terms (cf., Jones, 2002), then how can we account for the fact that linguistic communication is itself conscious, voluntary conduct like any other (cf. Jones, 2007)?

As Taylor (1997) argues, communicative practices are 'normative practices', forms of voluntary behaviour subject to all the usual normative pressures of social existence, in particular the pressures to conform to some standard or norm that our peers, or the family or 'society' dictates. To see social regularities and conformities as *due to the power of signs* is, therefore, to misread the whole situation, as Taylor explains:

> To view language as a normative practice is thus not to adopt a form of linguistic determinism (biological, psychological, or structural). Rather it emphasizes the location of the voluntary acts of individual linguistic agents within the coercive moral context of everyday life. The social conformity which we can observe in the linguistic practice of individuals is thus not the product of a social or natural determinism; nor is it the shadow of an underlying shared object: biological, psychological or social. Instead, its source lies in the normative pressures individuals impose on those within and without their communities. That conformity comes from the social imposition of responsibility on the individual, not from the absence of moral responsibility embodied in determinism. (Taylor, 1997: 156)

The paradox we have noted afflicts Vygotsky's entire psychological theory as well as those attempts to 'modernize' Vygotsky's internalization conception by incorporating the insights of more recent research on the interactional and contextualized nature of talk. Sawyer and Stetsenko (2018), for example, reconstruct Vygotsky's speech-led internalization view in the following way:

> A picture emerges of how the development of self-directed speech furthers the practical activity of individual children, always in social connection and collaboration with others, just as the historical development of language facilitated and transformed human labor activity. While Vygotsky's work primarily emphasizes the self-regulating functions of private speech, later research has suggested a multitude of practical functions and developments associated with private speech. These include motivational and playful functions …, creativity …, dialogical perspective-taking …, social understanding …,and enhanced competence in social communication …. Moreover, deaf children have been found to use private sign – self-directed sign language – which appears to play the same role in practical activity that private speech does in hearing children …. The multiplicity of functions and forms that private speech can take are examples of a more general process of internalization, in which a diverse variety of social activities and relations become self-relations. As

> Vygotsky wrote, 'The child begins to practice with respect to himself the same forms of behavior that others formerly practiced with respect to him'. (Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2018: 149, authors' original references removed)

Thus, while the authors forcefully challenge, if not repudiate, the original ground work and motivation for the internalization process (the natural-cultural distinction, the conditional reflex, social determinism), the overall explanatory arc of the internalization conception – semiotic self-regulation of action emerging from the regulatory speech of others – is otherwise, and paradoxically, maintained.

In that light, to challenge Vygotsky's semiology of '(self-)regulation' is at once a challenge to his view of the communicational powers that linguistic sign-making involves and to his view of the defining qualities of human interrelating. Wootton, for example, draws attention to 'the significance of *self-guided processes*' (1997: 196, my emphasis), arguing that the child 'comes to be social by acting strategically so as to take account of what has happened in any given encounter' (1997: 4). In that light:

> The opportunity offered by discourse is the availability of orderly ways which permit interpersonal alignment to be negotiated on each and every occasion, and of ways which permit much more fine-grained co-ordination than is possible without discourse. (1997: 196)

Similarly, by challenging the cultural-historical view of self-communication as derivative of interpersonal communication, Harris (1996) opens up the prospect of thinking quite differently about subjectivity and, at the same time, about how the manifest regularities and conformities of collective human social action might be communicationally enabled (see Jones, 2009 and Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2018 for a response; see also Jones, 2018a, 2018b). Furthermore, by challenging the assumption that verbal utterances, by virtue of conceptual 'content', have a clearly definable, not to say indispensable *cognitive* role to play in planned action (cf Jones, 2016), it is possible to look quite differently at their communicational values in context and, hence, their social grounding and implications, as in Goffman's re-reading of the 'egocentric speech' of Piaget and Vygotsky (Goffman, 1981; Hauser, 2015; Jones, in press). And, finally, if the *creative* and *active* (as opposed to *re*active) character of our communicational powers is restored to primary position, then it is possible to develop a new 'semiotic of activity' in which our relationships and engagements with *things and processes in the world* are not mediated and directed by *inner signs* but, on the contrary, themselves become meaning*ful* and consequential – signs of *our* activity – in relation to our practices, goals and aspirations (Jones, 2011).

Conclusion

At the centre of Vygotsky's work is the nature of human sociality seen as a psychological problem, from the psychological end. But his account of sociality and the psychological development of the selfhood of the social individual is premised on and articulated in terms of specific communicational constructs and principles

which reflect and project a range of problematic assumptions and claims. In effect, human sociality is *defined* in communicational, primarily linguistic, terms. This assumption of a fundamental link, or even identity, between the processes and activities of linguistic communication, distinctively human social organization and the individual self is evident from the very beginning of Vygotsky's project. As Seifrid (2005) in fact argues, this exaltation of articulate speech (at least of the literate, cultured individual) was a consistent feature of the contemporary Russian language tradition. In Vygotsky's case, however, his commitment – at least initially – to the vulgar, pseudo-materialistic semiology of the various brands of physiological reductionism known as 'reflexology' was equally strong. In both the literate tradition and the Cartesian-inspired atheistic 'science' of reflexology, language ruled the roost. Ultimately, then, and despite his brilliant advances, Vygotsky leaves us with the rather familiar dualistic picture of a 'natural', uncultured body animated, directed and controlled by incorporeal verbal meanings.

Though Vygotsky attempted nothing along the lines of the major projects of metalinguistic systematization that constituted the main tramlines of theoretical reflection and analysis of linguistic experience from the beginning of the twentieth century,[7] the reflexological conception of behaviour which Vygotsky took from Pavlov and others came with its own meta-communicational commitments in the shape of the 'signal' as the foundation and vehicle of the conditional reflex vision. In giving this construct – however nuanced, modified or historicized in successive theoretical revisions – the central place in the developmental progression from 'natural' to 'cultural' psychological powers, Vygotsky threatened to sacrifice the social-transformative vision of Marx to a naturalistic reductionism whose limitations became the more obvious as his research programme progressed.

Naturally, Vygotsky cannot be held responsible for the absence of a non-mechanistic, socially informed view of linguistic communication in the field of linguistic theorizing at that time. Indeed, it wasn't until much later – for example, in the work of J L Austin (1962) and that of the interactionists and ethnomethodologists (e.g. Goffman, 1972, 1975) – that attention began to be concentrated on the distinctive forms of social action (e.g. questions, statements, promises, instructions, greetings, etc.) that language use regularly involves and the fine networks of reflexive social relations and organization that such communicational actions presuppose and enable.

It is important that the significance of communicational notions for Vygotskian psychology is being increasingly problematized (Burman, 2016; Jones, 2007, 2019; Zhang, 2019). However, it is also vital to recognize, more generally, the dependence of psychological theory on particular perspectives on language and communication. Ultimately, then, the search for a 'cultural-historical' or 'critical' psychology will be fruitless without a searching examination of the linguistic and communicational

[7] Aside from the distinctively Russian traditions of linguistic philosophy and theory discussed by Seifrid (2005), one of the most direct and important influences on Vygotsky's views on language, thinking, conceptual thought, inner speech and the non-localization of psychological functions was Edward Sapir, as can be seen from the remarkable Introduction to Sapir (1921).

underpinnings of psychology itself as a specialized discipline and intellectual tradition.

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Chapter 9
Problematizing Pedagogical Imports and Creating New Conditions for Children's Development: A Case from China

Marilyn Fleer, Liang Li, and Zhonglian Yan

Abstract The divergence and fragmentation of psychology into areas such as critical psychology, cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, indigenous psychology and cultural-historical psychology have meant that the conceptual tools available from each have not traditionally been brought to bear on one study. However, as communities merge into a global dynamic, contemporary research needs change, and complex research problems arise that need new conceptual tools. This chapter draws upon the methodological principles and concepts of both critical psychology and cultural-historical theory for understanding the play practices and conditions for structuring play in one kindergarten from one province in China. The focus is on how the central problem of implementing a play-based curriculum in a context of traditionally formalized learning practices has resulted in new play practices that create new conditions for children's development. The findings speak directly into the international literature in new ways. This chapter raises questions about pedagogical imports and the expected alignment of Chinese cultural heritage values to Western play practices. Four central critical ideas emerged: *Western romanticized views of play, beyond the individualized playing child, play colonialism* and *challenging laboratory-based empirical play* as the only valid form of knowledge generation about play. It is argued that the tools from both traditions of critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology are needed for disrupting misconceptions in contexts where cultural communities are engaged globally and working locally.

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Introduction

This chapter is concerned with how the concepts from both critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology work together when dealing with complex research problems in early childhood settings. It is argued that a cultural-historical methodology gives the possibility for a holistic and dialectical conception of the setting and the participants (Hedegaard, 2008). Critical psychology allows for a critical perspective to emerge. Sheese (2014; p. 1571; original emphasis), in quoting Hook (2004: 11), has said that, "Critical psychology is more an *approach, a kind of orientation* towards psychological knowledge and practice".

Like critical psychology, which goes beyond individualism and an atomistic view of research, "Cultural-historical psychology is presented by critical psychologists and critical educators as an alternative to traditional psychology" (Dafermos, 2014, 1833). In drawing upon the work of Gonzalez Rey and Martinez (2013), Dafermos (2014) has noted that, "Critical psychologies suggest the reintroduction of the topic of subjectivity which was ignored by Soviet and Western psychologies" (p. 1833). Subjectivity moves the research lens from an objective orientation to a methodology that captures in motion the subjective productions of humans in social situations building new social pathways (Gonzalez Rey, 2017). Both cultural-historical psychology and critical psychology emphasize the qualitative character of human life, transcending conceptions of individuals in a process of intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1987).

Together, the concepts from cultural-historical and critical psychology capture holistically the societal values and motive orientations that are framed in the relations between personal, institutional and societal practices (Hedegaard, 2008) and ask questions about the dominant practices or emerging power struggles or social inequities that exist in contexts of incongruence (Dafermos, 2014). In order to explore the relations between these two traditions, a case study of practices is needed to show the uniqueness of both for illuminating human complexity, social productions and pathways.

The central problem that is used as the case example for this chapter is how do teachers in China, faced with a government mandate to implement a play-based curriculum, position themselves within an enacted play-based programme? A play-based curriculum is a Western construction. Teachers in China have previously not needed to plan and implement play-based programmes (Rao and Li, 2009). In the past, there has been no tradition for supporting play pedagogy within universities and early childhood settings, nor has such a pedagogy been seen as an expectation by families (Fan, Nyland, & Nyland, 2016; Hu, Li, Fan, & Leong, 2015). The government demand for a play-based programme is embedded in the guidelines for early childhood practice (Ministry of Education, 2001; State Council, 2010), and, as such, a study that examines how teachers create these new conditions and position themselves within the new practices requires a complex set of concepts for understanding this problem holistically – because it is simultaneously a local and global

phenomenon. It is suggested that this complex problem needs to draw upon concepts from both cultural-historical psychology and critical psychology.

This chapter seeks to bring critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology to bear on the problem of how teachers deal with the introduction of Western play-based practices in early childhood settings. In so doing, it opens up new ways of researching and theorizing in global contexts, where new demands have been made upon teachers in their local communities and early childhood settings. To achieve this goal, the chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of the concepts used in the research, followed by an introduction to the study context, a brief overview of the findings and a more extensive discussion of how both critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology have advanced methodological understandings for researching in complex contexts. Through this, it is argued that the central problem of implementing a play-based curriculum in a context of traditionally formalized learning practices can be more holistically studied and critically analysed.

Insights into the Methodological Principles that Support Researching Complexity in Early Childhood Settings

Teo (2014) has argued that there is no one approach or one definition that captures what is critical psychology and that it can be represented through the traditions of "phenomenology and hermeneutics, Marxism, feminism, social constructionism, anti-psychiatry, anarchism, critical theory, chaos theory, critical race and disability theory, queer theory, radical community psychology, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, postcolonial theory, and other non-mainstream approaches" (p. vii). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this broad spectrum of theoretical, methodological and research methods. Rather, we seek to present a case example that is illustrative of the power of the concepts within both critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology, which together give a holistic and critical reading on the research problem, and that will advance previous research (e.g. Fan et al., 2016; Hu et al., 2015; Rao and Li, 2009; Vong, 2012; Yan, Yuejuan, & Hongfen, 2005).

Practices are always in motion, and in the case example presented further below, there is a need to capture the dynamics of the local practices and the national imperatives for implementing a play-based programme. Teachers are simultaneously engaged locally in early childhood practices whilst also being shaped globally through government guidelines that appropriate practices from other countries with different cultural traditions (Rao & Li, 2009). This is not new. But what is different is how the dialectical demands and motives for the introduction of a play-based curriculum can generate new conceptions of play practices that productively contribute to broader international developments in early childhood education. It has been shown that, "The local is part of the global agenda where those from the south, the so-called third world, can speak for themselves and have something to say and be

with other worlds" (Miranda-Gieboloni & Rivera-Santana, 2014, p. 1062). Yet what kind of critical orientation and research tool kit is needed to realize and give voice to a new research agenda in China and one which speaks back into the international literature?

Sheese (2014) has argued that a particular critical worldview is needed for all contexts, and this is recognized in critical psychology as the development of a critical consciousness of a person's situation. This worldview can support people to become "active, critical, and empowered agents – constructing meaning rather than memorizing facts" (p. 1572) or reproducing what is already known. Yet, research that achieves this key goal requires not only a particular critical stance but also a powerful tool kit for capturing the dialectics of local context and global imperatives that are being taken up by government and actioned through national policy – as is seen in China in the field of early childhood education. The writing of the national guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2001; State Council, 2010) is illustrative of the dialectic between local context and global imperatives, generating a dynamic tension, which we argue is productive for developing new play concepts.

Miranda-Gieboloni and Rivera-Santana (2014), in their review of critical psychology in the Latin American context, note how a critical perspective brings to psychology a distancing from the dominant positivist epistemology and recognizes through its methodology that actions are also political, is sensitive to economic conditions and power struggles, makes visible social injustices and is active towards improving the life conditions for all. In Latin American psychology, Miranda-Gieboloni and Rivera-Santana (2014) have argued that a hybrid position has presented itself over time to deal with the practical and theoretical issues associated with researching within a postcolonial time. They have suggested that Marxism was important for the development of a critical perspective in psychology, as it has also been for cultural-historical theory. In both theoretical traditions, this has resulted in "subject and subjectivities" being "recognised as the object of study in psychology, moving away from the behavioral traditions" (pp. 1059–1060). What has emerged in research has been the positioning of a critical perspective within cultural-historical theory "raising theoretical concerns as well as action" (Miranda-Gieboloni & Rivera-Santana, 2014, p. 1060). In line with other chapters in this volume, both traditions appear to be at one in their departure from positivistic perspectives and appear to have similar theoretical roots, but have emerged in different ways. Together, they give a powerful platform from which to study play practices in China and to speak back into the broader international community.

A Case Example from Chang Kindergarten

The case example that is introduced in this chapter brings forward practice traditions as well as the emerging new practices that are in the process of being developed in the kindergarten. In drawing upon the methodological principles and

practices of critical psychology and cultural-historical theory, the case example of the Chang kindergarten is introduced.

Case Study Context The study took place in the province of Jilin and in the city of Changchun. The kindergarten setting that was the focus of the research discussed in this chapter had 35 children (4.10–5.11 years, mean age of 4.7 years) and 5 staff. The kindergarten complex included 24 classes and more than 670 children, in bands of under 3s, 3–5 year olds and 6 year olds. It opened its doors at 7.40 am and was closed at 5 pm. The children had scheduled lessons of science, the arts, physical education and a routine that began with outdoor activities. A mix of organized lessons and free play periods formed the structure of the programme. Free play went from 8.40 am to 9.50 am each day. This is consistent with the recent literature on time spent on free play practices being 30 min per day (Fan et al., 2016).

The free play period that is the focus of this chapter commenced after arrival and whole group time. Whole group time involved each child placing a chair into a semi-circle oriented towards the other children and the teacher. At this time, the children declared which play area in the room they would spend time in. Once each child had decided where they would go, they would put away their chair and would join their group of players in the area they had nominated. Where needed, roles were assigned through the use of some tag to designate their activity for the duration of the play period, such as "cashier" or "seller" in the "supermarket" area. The children stayed in their assigned play role and self-nominated play area for the whole of the free play period.

Activity Setting In this chapter, we capture the dynamics of the free play period through following the intentions of the children and the teachers during their time in the supermarket play area. Specifically, we observe the demands and motives of the staff and children as they negotiate their roles within the activity setting of the supermarket play area. We use the holistic conception of research pioneered by Hedegaard (2014) and further developed through the use of digital video observations (Fleer & Ridgway, 2014; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008).

Analysis To achieve the goals of the study, we analyse how the teacher positions herself in relation to the activity setting, drawing upon Kravtsova's concept of subject positioning. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) have conceptualized teachers in dialectical pairs where they take a particular pedagogical position, such as acting "above the child", "equal with the child", "below the child" and the "primordial we" position where they are actively modelling to the child. This allows the child to be in the activity setting, being swept along with the dominant motives and demands inherent in the activity setting, but not necessarily understanding or participating. The teachers in pairs usually act in complementary ways, such as when one teacher is equal with the children, the other teacher might be above the children or even below the children, asking for help from the children. In addition, there is a further positioning that is centred on the child, which is where the child is independent of the teacher, but the teacher is closely observing them and socially referencing to

Table 9.1 Overview of data generated through the study

Research context	Research activities	Hours of data
Chang kindergarten	Video observation	42.5 h
	2 researcher cameras × 5 h × 4 visits	
	1.5 h video workshop	
	1 h video interview with focus group teachers	
Nanjing kindergarten	Video observation	21 h
	2 researcher cameras × 2 days × 4.5 h	
	2 h video workshop with teachers	
	1 h video interview with teachers	
Chengdu kindergarten	Video observation	19.5 h
	1 kindergarten camera × 7 h	
	1 researcher camera × 4.5 h × 2 visits	
	2.5 h video workshop with teachers	
	1 h video interview with focus group teachers	

them. We have added to Kravtsov and Kravtova's (2010) subject positioning approach by including in our analysis the possibilities for other positions, which we have called "observing and reading the child's intentions". This category has been found in previous research (Fleer, 2015), but also appeared within this study and is discussed in relation to the findings and methodological power of both critical and cultural-historical perspectives on researching in early childhood settings. The analysis of the activity setting is complemented by an analysis of data generated through a focus group interview of all the senior kindergarten staff and specifically through questions focused on the supermarket play that was planned and is the focus of the example in this chapter. The data gathered is summarized in Table 9.1.

A critical perspective is brought to bear on the focus group data (Teo, 2014) in the context of the holistic study of play practices, and together with the digital video data, this gives a dynamic data set for better understanding the problem of how the teachers develop new play practices within an activity setting whilst dealing with the government demand for implementing a play-based curriculum in China.

In this chapter, only the data from the learning area of the supermarket play in Chang kindergarten are analysed and presented.

Findings – A Case Example of Supermarket Play

To achieve the goals of this chapter, the activity setting of the supermarket learning area is examined specifically because the literature suggests that the government in China wishes to graduate children with highly developed creative and imaginative capabilities (e.g. Fan et al., 2016). The guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2001)

introduce play as a key practice for achieving this aim. This chapter examines the practices that are being developed because of this important political imperative.

We begin by introducing an example of a typical play practice that took place over 30 min of a scheduled learning area time. Only one learning area is featured in this chapter. What follows is an analysis of the supermarket learning area, with a specific focus on the intentions of the teachers in this activity setting. Three key segments are presented and 4 teacher play practices are discussed, and together these show how teachers in Chang, through their practice, have conceptualized play as a source of development for the children in their kindergarten.

Supermarket Play On this day, there are 6 children in the supermarket learning area of the kindergarten. Two are girls and 4 are boys. Yu is the teacher responsible for this learning area. Available to the children are trays of plastic replica food, such as chillies, potatoes and apples. On the shelves are real products, such as books, tissues and paper plates. A selection of shopping baskets and trolleys are placed inside of the U-shaped learning area. A cashier station is set up near the exit to the play area. The children can use all the materials and the space freely. Teacher Yu is in close physical proximity and is available to the children over the 30 min of play time in this learning area. However, her position changes after two senior teachers observe her and the children's play practices (Part B). We foreground the practices in the activity setting before (Part A) and after (Part C) this moment in the study.

Part A: Dominant Practices Within the Activity Setting (0–12.15 min)

Teacher Play Practice 1 The dominant practice of Yu was to position herself outside of the activity setting and to closely observe the play of the children. Figure 9.1 shows how she physically placed herself next to the supermarket play, at an angle where she could see all the players. She is holding a pen and a copy of her notebook. Later she moved to another part of the activity setting and again was outside of the imaginary play setting, looking in and keenly observing what the children were doing and saying. For instance, when the children moved to the cashier, took out money from their handbags or purses and paid for the items that had been scanned and returned to the shopping baskets, the teacher said to the cashier about one of the children, J, "He has not given the money". Another child G responded by saying, "It has been used up!" This suggests that even though the teacher is outside of the imaginary play situation, where she is strategically positioned to view all of the children's play, she is aware of the play narrative and is able to actively contribute to the play activity of the children. However, her role is primarily as a teacher observer, who has a role of monitoring and correcting play behaviours in relation to the content of the supermarket play. This common practice has been captured as *observing and monitoring children's play from outside of the imaginary play situa-*

Fig. 9.1 Observing and monitoring children's play from outside of the imaginary play situation

tion. It is a well-understood pedagogical practice that is also found in early childhood settings within Western countries (Devi, Fleer, & Li, 2018; Fleer, 2015).

In line with this practice is the perspective of the teacher who from this position of being outside of the imaginary play situation also monitors how children socially engage with each other. This is especially important in the context of China, where free play practices have only recently been introduced into kindergartens and where the one child policy has impacted on the social development of children (see Wu, Li, & Wei, 2004). In Table 9.2, Teacher Yu is shown taking an active role in sorting out problems and helping children to play together in a productive way. From the position of being outside of the imaginary play, Teacher Yu eventually puts her arms around the distressed child (Fig. 9.2) who is unhappy that he cannot be the cashier.

Bodrova (2008) has shown in her research in US contexts that children want to play the main role in the imaginary play because they do not necessarily know about all of the different roles involved in supermarket play, such as someone who does the ordering, accounts, deliveries, managing the cleaners, etc. The cashier is the most obvious supermarket role to children. Bodrova (2008) in drawing upon Elkonin (2005) suggested that when children go on excursions to key occupational or industry contexts and study all of the roles within that service, their play practices dramatically change and problems with each child wanting to take the same lead role diminish. Yet, in this example, this aspect of practice was not important. As will be shown later, the social relations between the children and the teacher and social competence of the children were viewed as important.

The identified social problem of being an only child growing up in family with two parents and two sets of grandparents is particularly noticeable in China because "Children who are cared for at home typically interacted only with the adults in their household" (Wu et al., 2004, p. 187), and parents reported behaviours of fight-

Table 9.2 Wanting to be the cashier

K走到J旁边, 想跟J互换角色:"我们换一下吧?"	K walked to J and wanted to switch the roles with J: "Can we switch the role"?
J:"不能换, 我不想换。"	J: "Can't switch. I don't want to switch".
K试图拿下脖子上挂的牌子。J阻止K:"不能换。我不想跟你做朋友。"	K tried to take off the employee card. J stopped K: "Can't switch. I don't want to make friends with you".
老师走过来, 跟J商量:"能不能让他当一次?"	The teacher came and asked J: "Can you give him a chance to play this role"?
J对老师说:"我不跟他换。"	J said to the teacher: "I don't want to switch with him".
老师对J说:"你就当售货员, 收银员就让他当一次。好不好?"	The teacher said to J: "You play the role as a seller, and let him play the cashier's role once. Ok"?
J摆摆手:"不行。"	J waved his hand: "No".
老师对J说:"你还想玩这个呀?"	The teacher said to J: "Do you still want to play it"?
J:"嗯。"	J: "Yes".
老师对J说:"那你得跟他好好说。说我还没玩完。"	The teacher said to J: "Then you need to talk to him kindly. Say I have not finished yet".
J对K说:"还没玩完呢。"	J faced to K: "Have not finished yet".
K一直摆弄着自己的挂牌, 沉着脸, 然后走向老师。	K played with the employee card, showed an unhappy expression on his face and then walked to the teacher.
老师安慰K, K说:"我就要玩那个, 因为我觉得那个好玩。"	The teacher comforted K, and K said: "I want to play that, because I think that is interesting".
J招呼G和H来"结账":"来, 过来, 你们过来。"	J called G and H to "pay the bill": "come, come here, you come here".
K看着J, 然后摘下挂牌, 把它给老师:"我就当他那个, 这个没意思。"	K looked at J, then took off the employee card and gave it to the teacher: "I want to play that, this is boring".
老师:"这个怎么没意思?你过来, 来。"	Teacher: "Why is it boring? You come, come here".
K:"就是没意思。"	K: "It is indeed boring".
老师:"那你要跟他(J)商量一下。他没玩好, 那也没办法。因为之前说好的(收银员)就是他。"	Teacher: "Then you need to discuss with him (J). He has not finished his play. There is no other way, because we have decided before that he is (the cashier)".
K:"不行, 我就要当他那个。"	K: "No, I want to play his role".

Fig. 9.2 Intervening from outside of the imaginary play

ing that they noticed subsided when involved in social settings that promoted play-based programmes. This reading of the family and context of the child opens up thinking *beyond the individual playing child* to considering the broader contexts and societal values associated with a policy focused on curbing population growth.

This study found that it was a common practice for early childhood teachers to take on the leading role in supporting problems in social interactions, as evidenced through the monitoring, correcting and supporting of children from outside of the imaginary play.

The outside positioning of the teacher has also been found in previous research as common in Western early childhood education contexts that promote free play practices by setting up learning or play areas in the kindergarten, such as the home corner, the puzzle area, the block corner and areas within the outdoor environment (e.g. Fleer, 2015).

Part B: Changing Practices Within the Activity Setting

In the study of Chang kindergarten, the researchers were visibly present digitally filming the play practices of the children and the teachers. Three researchers were present and some visiting university students. However, the kindergarten is well versed in having visitors, as this is the norm for this kindergarten. Teachers regularly visit kindergartens. Many visitors come to Chang kindergarten to observe the practices there. During the study, the children and the teachers of Chang continued the programme as planned. Teachers within Chang observe practices of the children and teachers and regularly reflected on how to improve.

Fig. 9.3 Teachers collectively reading the play – how to develop the children's play

Two senior teachers from Chang kindergarten came and observed the play practices in the supermarket learning area. Figure 9.3 (at 12.15 min) shows the senior teachers discussing the play practices with Teacher Yu. Focus group interviews were undertaken on the following day, and we asked about the conversation of the teachers, in order to understand what they had observed, analysed and concluded. The teachers identified key pedagogical challenges that required a more active role for the teacher in the children's play, such as:

- *The teacher does not have as much experience as some of the other teachers in supporting the extension of children's play.*
- *When you want the children to keep playing, then you need to in some way keep it going.*
- *As a teacher, you have to then buy goods as a customer, to show a good model, to make a payment. In this way, the play is extended.*

In observing and analysing the play practices, it was argued by the senior teachers that the teacher had positioned herself in an observational role only. "The focus was only on one child's behaviour in the supermarket play" – once again problematizing the ideology of the *individualized playing child*. It was suggested in the focus group interview that problems arise in the play, such as, "when both children want to be a cashier in the supermarket play". Chang kindergarten, through its leadership, has in place a supportive context in which teacher development of new practices was actively supported. The data from the focus group interviews showed that in the enacting of pedagogical practices to develop children's play, time was given for teacher reflection. For instance, "Time is given for teacher exchanges, to learn about how to support children to negotiate". The practice tradition at Chang kindergarten is for the teachers to reflect on their own observations of the play and to analyse the

pedagogical practices of other teachers within the kindergarten. For example, "Four teachers discussed how they could improve upon the supermarket learning activity, how they could have introduced shopping bags. This was then done on the following day of play activities".

As a result of the senior teachers discussing with Teacher Yu the play practices they were observing, she changed her role completely. That is, she actively resisted the *romanticized view of play* found in Western contexts, where the teacher stands back and allows the play to unfold.

Part C: New Practices Within the Same Activity Setting Create New Conditions for Children's Development

With what appeared to be minimal discussion, Teacher Yu smoothly and effectively created new conditions for the children's development. In the remainder of the play period observed, a diversity of play practices was observed. But rather than Yu positioning herself outside of the activity setting observing, and only engaging with the children in a monitoring role, she now was an active play partner. In her new position, she enacted the following 3 new play practices:

1. Parallel play inside of the imaginary play situation (equal positioning)
2. Modelling and expanding the play practices (both everyday concepts and abstract concepts) (above and equal positioning)
3. Introducing problem scenarios inside the imaginary play situation (equal positioning)

We suggest that these new practices push against "play colonialism"; that is to say the domination of a Western conception of play, traditionally associated with developmentally appropriate practices as conceptualized in the USA and which has found its way into the discussions of play in China (e.g. Hu et al., 2015).

Teacher Play Practice: Playing in Parallel Inside of the Imaginary Play Situation (Equal Positioning)

The most obvious difference between Part A and Part C of the observation of the supermarket activity setting is that Yu is no longer outside of the imaginary play. For the remainder of the observation (approximately 20 mins), she was inside the activity setting. One of the roles she took was to play equally with the children. In what appeared to be almost a parallel play situation, Yu simply shopped like all the other children. She chose items and placed them into her basket and queued with the other children to pay, waiting patiently for the cashier to serve her. This positioning as equal with the children opened up possibilities for expanding the play, as the following sections show (Fig. 9.4).

Fig. 9.4 Teacher plays in parallel with the children

Teacher Play Practice: Modelling and Expanding the Play Practices in the Activity Setting (Both Everyday Concepts and Abstract Concepts)

In the following summary transcript, we find that Teacher Yu was able to sensitively introduce the everyday concepts of going shopping, as we might find in the social comments of people who know each other, such as when she looks into K's shopping basket and says, "You bought so many things, didn't you"? In this position of a shopper, she can smell the bread (Fig. 9.5), check for the prices of items she is interested in buying and ask L about the prices of different items, but also begin a new play narrative of lending money (Table 9.3). Through this new practice, she is able to expand the play narrative, but also introduce important mathematical concepts into the play. For instance, "Can you take the cucumber for me, and then help me have a look at the price" (under position)?

In Table 9.4 the narrative that is developing in the imaginary play takes another turn. Teacher Yu is inside of the imaginary play situation, and because of her close proximity to the play, she is able to sensitively expand the play. She notices that K is kneading dough as though making bread. Yu asks if the bread is done and then takes the bread and smells it (Fig. 9.5). This offer for developing the play is accepted by the children, who add to the narrative cream and jam. As the context is a supermarket, the children discuss the price of the bread. H picks up one loaf of "bread" and asks: "How much is it"? The teacher responds in role as a shopper and directs H to ask K, "Ask him".

By using children's motive orientation to play, the teacher is able to position herself inside of the imaginary play situation, where she can model particular play practices and expand the storyline, giving it more conceptual content. She also models patience by waiting her turn with the cashier, and she foregrounds that being a

Fig. 9.5 Teacher modelling everyday concepts in the imaginary play situation

customer is also an important play role, thus, expanding the importance of the different roles, from only the cashier being important. The content she introduces is relevant to the play, but also to supporting the mathematics curriculum, and it deepens the dialogue between the children, making the shopping experience more interesting (Fig. 9.6).

Teacher Play Practice: Introducing Problem Scenarios Inside the Imaginary Play Situation (Equal Positioning)

In Table 9.5 and Fig. 9.7, it is possible to see how Teacher Yu supports the development of mathematical concepts through the storyline she has introduced of borrowing money. This gives the possibility to spend but also, once the money is spent, to be able to continue to shop. But the activity is framed around borrowing and returning money. This allows the mathematics discourse to be interwoven into the play narrative in a meaningful way, suggesting a conceptual play focus is being supported (Fleer, 2011).

The teacher, Yu who is inside of the play sensitively enters into the play and picks the moments to introduce a problem situation. This is more than just smuggling in the content (Hedges, 2014). She skilfully brings mathematical concepts into the development of the play narrative. Rather than being smuggled in, she is overtly introducing mathematical narratives. Through bringing together everyday practices with abstract mathematical concepts (Vygotsky, 1987) through the problem scenario of "not having enough money" and "borrowing yuan" to repay later, the children's play is enriched. Concepts are acting in the service of the children's play (Fleer, 2017a). However, this is only possible because Teacher Yu has now entered

Table 9.3 Shopping

H正在把购物篮里的东西都放回原处。	H was putting the items in the shopping basket back.
H对G说:"过来帮帮我。"	H said to G: "Come and help me".
G过去帮H把篮子里的东西放回原处。	G came to help H and put the items in the basket back.
同时,K在"瓜果蔬菜区"挑选物品。老师也在"瓜果蔬菜区"提着"购物盘"挑选, 并向L询问价格。(L扮演售货员角色)	Meanwhile, K was selecting items in the "vegetable and fruit area". The teacher was also shopping in the "vegetable and fruit area" with a shopping plate in her hand. The teacher asked L about the prices of different items. (L was playing the role as a seller now.)
老师看着K的购物篮说:"你买这么多啊?"	The teacher, Yu, looked at K's shopping basket and said: "You bought so many things, didn't you"?
K"嗯"了一声继续往购物篮放"瓜果蔬菜"。	K responded "En" (suprised sound) and continued to put the "vegetables and fruits" into the shopping basket.
L对老师说:"我钱好多。"	L said to the teacher: "I have so much money".
老师:"你钱这么多呀?你一会借我点好吗?"	Teacher Yu: "You have so much money. Can you lend me some money"?
L:"好的。"	L: "Sure".
老师指着"黄瓜"对L说:"你再帮我拿个黄瓜, 再帮我看看多少钱。"	The teacher pointed at the "cucumber" and said to L: "Can you take the cucumber for me, and then help me have a look at the price" [16.40–19.20]?

into the imaginary play. The teacher-child dialogue is very different from Part A of the observation of the activity setting of the supermarket learning area, where the teacher only corrected children's behaviour and positioned herself as minimizing interference in their play.

Discussion

In drawing upon concepts and methods from cultural-historical theory, the case example of Chang kindergarten introduced in this chapter presents a holistic conceptualization of the different conditions for children's development during 30 min of scheduled play time. This approach to research allowed for the subjectivity of Teacher Yu, and the different social productions with her senior colleagues, to emerge, where alternative pathways for social practice were captured (Gonzalez Rey,

Table 9.4 Making, smelling and buying bread

老师问K:"好了吗?"	The teacher, Yu, asked K: "Done"?
K做出捏东西的动作,好像正在做面包。K回应老师:"做好了一个,还差六个。"	K was making a kneading gesture as if he was making bread. K responded to the teacher: "One is done, and still have 6 to go".
老师:"我要两个。你多做一会。我要两个。"	Teacher: "I need two. Take your time. I need two".
K蹲下来看着"烤箱"(桌子底部用帘子遮起来的部位当作"烤箱"),说:"没有奶油了。"	K squatted down and looked at the "oven" (the area under the table and covered with the curtain was imagined as the oven), and said: "There is no cream".
老师拿了一样东西给K:"给你这个。" K:"没有草莓了。"	The teacher took something to K: "Give you this." K receives it and says: "No strawberry".
老师又递给K一样东西:"给你这个吧。"	The teacher passed him another thing: "Give you this".
老师对K说:"我想买面包。"	The teacher said to K: "I want to buy bread".
K递给老师一个"面包。老师问:"做完了是吧?"K:"对, 还热的呢。"	K gave the teacher one loaf of "bread". The teacher asked: "It's done, right"? K: "Yes, it's still warm".
老师拿起"面包"闻了闻:"好香。"	The teacher smelled the "bread" and commented: "smells good".
H拿起一个"面包"问:"这几块呀?" 老师指着K对H说:"问他。"	H picked one "bread" and asked: "How much is it"? The teacher pointed at K and said to H: "ask him".
H问K:"这几块呀?" K:"这四十元。"	H asked K: "How much is it"? K: "This is 40 yuan".
G拿过H手里的"面包"放回原处, 跟H说:"我想买啥就买啥。"	G took over the "bread" in H's hand, put it back and said to H: "Buy everything I want to buy".
老师拿起一个"面包"问K:"这是你刚刚做完的吗?"	The teacher took one "bread" and asked K: "Is it the one you just made"?
K接过"面包"放回柜子说:"没草莓了。"	K took over the "bread" and put it into the shelf: "There is no strawberry".
老师从柜子里拿出一样东西给K:"这个草莓果酱在这呢。"	The teacher took one thing from the shelf and gave it to K: "Here is the strawberry jam".
K接过"草莓果酱"看了下, 又放回柜子。J走过来说:"草莓果酱是可以买的。"	K took the "strawberry jam", had a look at it and then put it back on the shelf. J came and said: "Strawberry jam can be bought".
老师问K:"做好了吗? "K看着"烤箱"	The teacher asked K: "Is it done"? K looked at the "oven".
老师对K说:"那你先做着, 我先去结帐。"	The teacher said to K: "You continue to make it, and I am going to make the payment first" (30–31.55 mins).

Fig. 9.6 Teacher modelling mathematical concepts in the imaginary play situation

Table 9.5 Borrowing money

L提着购物篮到"收银台"结帐。L拿出篮子里的"苹果"给J, J"扫码"以后说:"五块钱。"然后递给L。L示意J将"苹果"放到"收银台"的一处。	L held the shopping basket and walked to the "cashier desk" to make the payment. L took out the "apple" from the basket and gave it to J. J "scanned" it: "5 yuan". Then J gave the "apple" to L. L indicated J to put the "apple" in the place next to the "cashier desk".
L又拿出篮子里的"大蒜"给J。J给"大蒜""扫码", 说:"五块"。	L took out the "garlic" from the basket and gave it to J. J "scanned" it and said: "5 yuan".
L把"钱"给J, 然后把"大蒜"放回篮子里继续购物。	L gave the "money" to J, put the "garlic" back into the shopping basket and continued to shop.
老师拿起一个物品问K:"这个怎么卖呀?"	The teacher took one item and asked K: "How much is it"?
K:"这个24。"	K: "This is 24".
老师:"24啊?钱不够呀。"	Teacher: "24? I dont have enough money".
J走到老师边:"钱不够我借给你。"	J walked to the teacher: "I can lend you, if you dont have enough money".
老师:"借给我呀?谢谢。"	Teacher: " Lend me? Thank you".
J拿来"钱"给老师。	J gave some "money" to the teacher.
老师继续边问K价格, 边挑选物品。	The teacher continued to shop and ask K about the prices.

Fig. 9.7 Teacher expands the play through introducing problem scenarios – I don't have enough money?

2017). Both Part A and Part C are dramatically different and potentially exemplify the changing context in China (Hu et al., 2015). These different social productions *challenge laboratory-based studies of play* as the only valid form of empirical knowledge about play. Cultural-historical theory has made visible how societal values for more creative individuals have resulted in the need for new kinds of practices at the institutional level. This is also in keeping with interview data gathered by Fan et al. (2016). "Our Kindergarten has changed and most children are learning through play, except those who are about to start school. I think cultivating the overall capability of children – that is their cognitive competence, creativity, imagination and behavior – is the most important aim" (Fan et al., 2016, p. 37). But in contrast to the findings of our study, Hu et al. (2015) have argued that, "while play is important to the development of Chinese children these children are actually deprived of meaningful play" (p. 10). A critical perspective would invite questions about what might constitute meaningful play practices in China and how the empirical knowledge about this was generated.

Fan et al. (2016) have argued that there is a gap between policy and practice in China, and this gap has been filled by the teachers themselves. For instance, they found in their interviews, "When the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* were first issued, people tended to interpret them literally and strictly followed the instruction. I think we should consider the guidelines as principles that need to be integrated into practice" (p. 38). Although the mandate to implement the guidelines had the effect of creating a motive orientation for new play-based curriculum practices, the support available for realizing this institutional change was much more problematic. With this backdrop in mind, it is rather surprising, then, that a short conversation between senior teachers and the kindergarten teacher (Part B) in our study had an

immediate effect on the teacher's practice. She moved from the periphery and into the imaginary play situation. Previous research in Australia, where teachers have an expectation of not interfering in children's play, has shown that it takes a great deal of professional development to enable teachers to purposefully enter into children's play (Fleer, 2017b). Consequently, this case example suggests that important professional factors and established cultural practices could support a new conception of *group play* that is in keeping with the group orientation of children and teachers in China, moving the debate beyond an individual ideology of interfering in a child's play. Hu et al. (2015) have rightly suggested that, "Chinese children's engagement in free play, which might convey meanings that differ from how free play is perceived, interpreted and carried out in western contexts" can actively dispel Western ethnocentrism of what it means for children to play in kindergartens. This critical perspective goes beyond a simplistic, static and dichotomous conception of the Chinese learner and teacher. In the broader context of the Chinese learner, Lee and Mok (2008) draw attention to the dichotomous approaches to characterizing the Chinese learner in relation to the Western learner. Concepts from critical psychology open up dialogue, inviting critique and problematizing interpretations of findings (Teo, 2014). The literature on the Chinese learner brings this critical worldview which must be considered in any study that speaks back into the global literature. Capturing holistically the perspectives of society, the institutions and the person may not be enough on its own. Concepts from critical psychology problematize and question, inviting researchers to go deeper and to be conscious of their gaze on the data and the findings they report.

The case example in this chapter shows, as Miranda-Gieboloni and Rivera-Santana (2014) have argued, that new pedagogical practices have emerged in China, creating new kinds of conditions for children's development. These new practices being developed in the global south contribute substantially into the new international early childhood agenda about increasing outcomes for children (Fleer & van Oers, 2018). The practices to support the changing global contexts and the new Chinese play practices that emerged in this case example were:

1. Parallel play inside of the imaginary play situation (equal positioning)
2. Modelling and expanding the play practices (both everyday concepts and abstract concepts) (above and equal positioning)
3. Introducing problem scenarios inside the imaginary play situation (equal positioning)

Cultural-historical theory supported a holistic study frame and critical theory brought to the findings important insights into the development of new play practices, practices that appeared to be important for teachers in China. These new play practices speak into the international literature in fresh and exciting ways because they create new kinds of developmental conditions for children. What can be determined is that the new practices move beyond *Western romanticized views of play*, where the adult must not interfere in children's play. They move beyond the ideology of *the individualized playing child* that is prevailing in observations, assessment and programme planning discourses. The play practices and how they have emerged

in the context of a 30 min planned supermarket play move beyond a form of *play colonialism* in which there is only one view of play worthy of consideration and which must be appropriated. Finally, the view that only certain forms of research can be undertaken to generate knowledge about play is contested in this case example. That is, *laboratory-based empirical play* can never present the full breadth of how play practices emerge in settings where new political imperatives have created new conditions for teachers to develop new practices.

Conclusion

This chapter raises questions about pedagogical imports and the expected alignment of Chinese cultural heritage values to Western play practices. The case example has shown how new practices and new conditions for children's development are being realized in China. Four central critical ideas emerged: *Western romanticized views of play, beyond the individualized playing child, play colonialism* and *challenging laboratory-based empirical play* as the only valid form of producing knowledge about play. It is argued that the concepts from both traditions of critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology are needed for building a holistic case that brings together societal, institutional and personal perspectives (cultural-historical psychology), whilst disrupting colonial misconceptions in contexts where cultural communities are engaged globally and working locally (critical psychology) to develop new play practices.

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Chapter 10
Nationalism and/or Developing Understanding of Society?

Athanasios Marvakis

> *'When the Bolivarian guerrillas in 1967 explained to the peasants in Muyopampa that they had to support Vietnam, they believed Vietnam was a neighboring village and they wondered that they didn't knew anything about this village'.*
> Regis Debray (1978, p. 96)

Abstract The research on the development of national/political orientations follows, since its very beginning, two mutually exclusive directions: One is operating with dichotomies – between normal 'national consciousness' and deviant 'nationalism'. The second is interested in how children develop their understanding of society.

We will follow Piaget on the laborious process on developing 'a faculty' for cognitive and affective 'awareness of their own homeland and that of others', with 'reciprocity' as its crowning finale. This level of understanding will be complemented with differentiations by Meacham and Riegel (Dialektische Perspektiven in Piagets Theorie. In: Die Psychologie des 20. Jhd., Bd. VIII ("Piaget und die Folgen"). Kindler, Zürich, pp 172–183, 1978), proposing to enhance decentration with complementary processes of recentration.

German Critical Psychology proposes not to limit our understanding of human action in its functioning within interactive-cooperative relationships and conjunctures. The individual faculty to intertwine perspectives ('reciprocity') is only a necessary condition in ontogenesis, though not a sufficient 'level' of (psychical) development in order to access one's own complexly mediated relation to the world. If we don't want to ignore the intermediation with societal interest constellations and contradictions, we have to go beyond 'reciprocity' and – using abstract tools like concepts – to take in account the 'societal mediatedness of individual existence' (Holzkamp K, Grundlegung der Psychologie. Campus, Frankfurt/M., 1983) in its psychic aspects.

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Introduction[1]

The psychological development of political orientations has been an important and classical topic in social sciences since the 1920s (e.g. see Thurstone 1928; Piaget 1928). In this short introduction, I want to point to the two main and mutually exclusive paths along which social-scientific research has been conducted since then; I will, however, discuss more thoroughly the second perspective on the developing political orientations.

The first – and we can also say the major – line of research operates with a series of dichotomies, primarily with that between 'normal' *national consciousness* and 'deviant' *nationalism*.[2] In this line of research, the task for the social scientist seems to be to position the subjects on a continuum between normalcy and deviance, after identifying a demarcation line between normality and deviation, and from there to diagnose individuals with 'developmental problems' – separating the ones who are 'within' (normality) from those who have 'trespassed over the line' (of normality).

The second direction of research refuses dichotomic conceptualizations; instead, it is interested in how children come to comprehend and participate in society, in the world. It is about the 'psychological origins of society' (Furth 1992) or 'children's understanding of society' (Barrett & Buchanan-Barrow 2005). Which psychological competencies are a prerequisite for the child to 'think' society? Milner (1984, p. 89) describes this alternative perspective using the example of racial prejudices: 'Prejudiced racial attitudes have not been seen, primarily, as the consequence of displaced, frustration-induced aggression, nor authoritarian personality tendencies; rather as a consequence of social influence via the socialization of children within societies where a hostile climate of attitudes toward particular ethnic minorities prevails'.

As we see in this example, prejudices (racial, ethnic, etc.) are not conceived as being grounded primarily in the psychological, developmental dynamic of the individual; rather, these prejudices are seen more as consequences of social influence, i.e. usually an uncritical adoption of existing assessments of different groups of people. Prejudices are *secondary* phenomena, with societally existing discriminations and social exclusions as *primary*. In such societal conditions, racist or nationalist attitudes, articulated in/as individual prejudices, are moments of *normal* socialization. The more important questions awaiting research and theoretical explanation are not the attain-

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[1] Personal introductory note: the subject of this paper (discriminatory orientations, like racism, nationalism etc.) constitutes the core of my scientific interests. The chapter offers me the opportunity to go through 'old' work (see e.g. Marvakis 1995) in an attempt to update and refine my positioning.

[2] 'Nationalism' as deviation is suggested to be seen as *over-learned* or *under-learned;* the second characterization was used for American children during WW II who 'identified with the enemy' (Davies 1968, p. 117). This line of thought includes also psychoanalytical 'essays' (as Davies calls them), e.g. Róheim (1950) or Feldman (1959), who assumed that the country/nation is a symbolical representation of the mother: 'Belonging to the nation means the successful mastery of the Oedipus complex' (Róheim 1950, p. 15). The developmental task – within this theoretical line – would be for the child to master the situation that though it has not to share its real mother, it has to share its symbolical one.

ment, the using of discriminatory, exclusionary positionings into one's own value orientations and then asking about *why* such a 'normal adjustment' is empirical observable. The more important questions would be about *how* and *why* individuals growing up in discriminating and excluding societal relations are *not* adopting, *not* repeating the preexisting, widespread racist and nationalist attitudes and orientations.

Within this line of research on the socialization process, a number of specific issues or topics are typically included, such as the development of children's 'economic' understanding (e.g. Claar 1990; Berti & Bombi 1988): What are work and pay? Where does money come from? Who owns the shop, the factory? Who is poor and who is rich?[3] Researchers also follow the development of children's' understanding of the functioning of societal institutions (banks, shops; e.g. see Jahoda 1984) or political organizations (e.g. political parties) and political institutions like governments (for 'children and politics' see, e.g. Greenstein 1965; Berti 2005). As Davies stated in his summary of this research as long ago as 1968 (p. 107):

> 'We now know that in broad outline, by twelve, a world picture is there and is solid. By then the basic items in the political kit are assembled: a firm sense of nationality; a rudimentary ideology (who is powerful, who should be more powerful; who are ally and enemy groups, external and domestic); a knowledge of the prestige of occupations, of the class structure, and which class one belongs to; of the party images and which party one votes for; and of the working of the political system (what leading politicians do, and what they are like)'.[4]

Jean Piaget and collaborators (1928; Piaget & Weil 1951) systematically researched the development of the prerequisite 'cognitive means' necessary for all this relating and attributing. In the next section, we will follow Piaget (and collaborators) in his research on this slow and laborious process during which children are developing cognitive and affective attitudes and a faculty for cognitive and affective 'awareness of their own homeland and that of others' (Piaget & Weil 1951), with 'reciprocity' as its crowning finale.

First Step: Developing the Notion of Homeland and 'Outland' According to Piaget[5]

In the context of his research on the cognitive development of children, Piaget conducted studies, as early as the 1920s, on how children could *think* the relation of the *city* Geneva and the *canton* Geneva to the *country* Switzerland. He summarizes the – for him – paradoxical results as follows:

> '… the feeling and the very idea of the homeland are by no means the first or even early elements in the child's make-up, but are a relatively late development in the normal child, …, before he attains to a cognitive and affective awareness of his own country, the child

[3] See also Holzkamp 1973, Ch. 7.4.

[4] For recent reviews, see Barrett and Buchanan-Barrow (2005) and Barrett (2007).

[5] Piaget (and collaborators) use the term 'homeland' to indicate the expanding space children are referring to.

> must make a considerable effort towards 'decentration' or broadening of his centres of interest (town, canton, etc.) and towards integration of his impressions (with surroundings other than his own), in the course of which he acquires an understanding of countries and points of view different from his own' (Piaget & Weil 1951, p. 562; this assessment is broadly shared; see, e.g. Jahoda 1963, p. 58; Davies 1968, p. 107).

For Piaget, the starting point in this development is 'unconscious egocentricity':[6] 'The child begins with the assumption that the immediate attitudes arising out of his own special surroundings and activities are the only ones possible' (Piaget & Weil 1951, p. 562). Let us listen to children of different ages:

> Florence N. 7;3.[7]
> What is Switzerland? *It's a country.*[8]
> And Geneva? *It's a town.*
> Where is Geneva? *In Switzerland* (drawing correct).
> What nationality are you? *I'm from Vaud.*
> Where is the canton of Vaud? *In Switzerland, not far away …*
> Are you Swiss as well? *No.*

How is that, since you've said that the canton of Vaud is in Switzerland? *You can't be two things at once, you have to choose; you can be a Vaudois like me, but not two things together* (p. 564).[9]

> Jean-Luc L. 11;1.
> What nationality are you? *I'm from St. Gallen*.
> How is that? *My father is from St. Gallen.*
> Are you Swiss too? *Yes, St. Gallen is in Switzerland, even though the people there talk German.* Then you are two things at once? *Yes, it's the same thing, since St. Gallen is in Switzerland. All people from Swiss cantons are Swiss. I'm from St. Gallen and still Swiss, and there are others who are Genevese or Bernese and still Swiss* (p. 565).[10]

Twenty years later, Piaget and Weil expanded their research towards the study of 'affective evaluations' (1951, p. 566), asking if we can observe here similar processes of decentration as stated previously in the context of cognitive development. Do children's evaluations develop in ways analogous to cognitive structures of logical and spatial relations? The introductory question they put to the children was: 'What country do you prefer?'

> Evelyne M. 5;9.
> *I like Italy. It's a nicer place than Switzerland.*
> Why? *I was there these holidays. They have the loveliest cakes, not like in Switzerland, where there are things inside that make you cry …*

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[6] For Piaget (and partners) 'egocentricity' refers to the difficulties of the child to incorporate (the) different positions of his dialogue partners (Piaget & Inhelder 1983, p. 88).

[7] Note: '7;3' is the abbreviation for 7 years and 3 months.

[8] The children's responses are in italics.

[9] A 6-year-old boy in Scotland (Jahoda 1963, p. 60) suggested a 'brilliant' solution: 'One week I'm Scottish and the next I'm British'.

[10] In their attempt to repeat Piaget's research in Scotland (Jahoda 1963) and in Australia (Knoche & Goldlust, 1966), the authors could document also a pre-Glasgow or pre-Melbourne stage of development where children were 'sure only of their street and the corner's leading to school' (as quoted by Davies 1968, p. 109).

Jacques G. 6;3.
I like Germany best because my mummy just got back from there tonight. It's ever so big and far away and my mummy lives there (1951, p. 566).

The authors summarize, 'During the first stage, the child who is asked for a value judgment does not even think of voicing any preference for Switzerland. He likes any country that appeals to his fancy at the moment and, if Switzerland is chosen, it is for some such reason' (1951, p. 566). At the second stage, children include different kinds of references in their responses:

Denis K. 8;3. *I like Switzerland because I was born there.*
Pierrette J. 8;9. *I like Switzerland because it's my own country. My mummy and daddy are Swiss, so I think Switzerland's a nice place.*
Jacqueline M. 9;3. *I like Switzerland. It's the loveliest country for me. It's my own country* (p. 566).

For the children on this developmental level, family ties and traditions are squarely in focus: 'The country becomes the terra patria, and, though there is still difficulty in ranging the town, canton and nation[11] in an exact order, this is unimportant: their common and therefore undifferentiated affective appeal is based on family feeling' (Piaget & Weil 1951, p. 567). However, the 'affective decentration' does not stop within the family; children at the third stage go beyond family relations and loyalties:

Juliette N. 10;3. *I like Switzerland because we never have any war here.*
Lucien 0. 11;2. *I like Switzerland because it's a free country.*
Michelle G. 11;5. *I like Switzerland because it's the Red Cross country. In Switzerland, our neutrality makes us charitable* (p. 567).

For the authors too, this 'sounds like a naive summary of patriotic village speeches!' (p. 567); the 'most general collective ideals' (ibid., p. 567)[12] make the 'strongest appeal' to the children: '… he gives these reasons because, beyond his personal feelings and the motives of family loyalty, he is finally realizing that there exists a wider community with its own values distinct from those of the ego, the family, the town and visible or concrete realities' (ibid.) Piaget and Weil are acknowledging here the efforts children are making and thereby 'succeeding in integrating spatio-temporal and logical relationships into the invisible whole formed by the nation or the country' (ibid.).

In the second section of their study, Piaget and Weil (1951) used the same technique in order

'to determine whether ideas or feelings about other countries, or peoples of other nationalities (as far as the child was acquainted with any such) develop along the same lines as those referred to in the first section, or whether there is an appreciable difference between the two

[11] When referring to cognitive development, the authors used the term 'country', but here they are using the term 'nation'! The term 'country' evokes geographical associations where the references to the city, canton and country could be conceived as 'logical relations' between 'part' and 'whole'. The term 'nation' though points *also* in some quite different direction. However, in the published text, both terms are used as synonyms.

[12] Nowadays we would talk about national auto-stereotypes.

types of concepts. Our second, and more important aim, was to lead up to the analysis of 'reciprocity" (p. 567f.).

As expected by the authors, children at the first developmental stage were claimed to have 'the same intellectual difficulty about including the part in the whole in regard to other countries as in regard to their own' (ibid., p. 568). Most of these children were not aware 'of belonging to their own particular country' (ibid., p. 569). At the second stage, the children were acquainted with and capable of different affective evaluations 'according to whether [their] social environment is understanding, critical, or even censorious of foreigners' (ibid.).

Murielle D. 8;2.
Have you heard of foreigners? *Yes, there are Germans and French.*
Are there any differences between these foreigners? *Yes, the Germans are bad. They're always making war. The French are poor and everything's dirty there. Then I've heard of Russians too. They're not at all nice.*
Do you have any personal knowledge of the French, Germans or Russians or have you read something about them? *No.*
Then how do you know? *Everyone says so* (p. 569).

The authors sum up:

In discarding his fugitive subjective judgments, and replacing them by the judgments of his environment, the child is, in a sense, taking a step forward, since he is projecting his mind into a system of relationships which broaden it and give it increased flexibility. But two courses then lie open to him: acquiescence (with its positive and negative aspects) and reciprocity, which requires independence of judgment in those concerned. (1951, p. 570)

What kind of responses do children at the third stage give?

Jacques W. 13;9.
Are there any differences between all those people? *Yes, they're not all of the same race and don't have the same language.*
And you don't find the same faces everywhere, the same types, the same morals and the same religion. But do all these differences have any effect on the people? *Oh yes, they don't all have the same mentality. Each people has its own special background* (p. 571).

Jean B. 13;3.
Are there any differences between all those countries? *There is only a difference of size and position between all these countries. It's not the country that makes the difference, but the people. You find all types of people everywhere* (p. 571).

The answers to the question "*What is a foreigner?*" point to decentration in the direction of mastering reciprocity. Swiss children at the first stage claim that they are not foreigners even in France, but the French are. At the second stage, they 'allow' French individuals in Switzerland to also be 'a little' Swiss. From the third stage on the children grasp what is going on with 'nationality' (meaning actually 'citizenship'). The development of children's preferred nationality – in the case where they or others have an opportunity to choose – follows a similar path. Parallel to this, children also develop their understanding of foreign countries. At the third stage, however, '"decentration" may take either of two possible forms: egocentricity, defeated on one plane, may reappear on another plane in the form of a sociocentricity ranging from the naive to the extremely subtle; or, on the contrary, the conquest of egocentricity may mean an advance towards "reciprocity"' (Piaget &

Weil 1951, p. 571 and p. 578). Having such potential impediments in mind, the main problem according to the authors 'is not to determine what must or must not be inculcated in the child; it is to discover how to develop that reciprocity in thought and action which is vital to the attainment of impartiality and affective understanding' (ibid., p. 578).

Second Step: Recentration

The research of Piaget (and collaborators) described the cognitive development of children up to the age of ca. 13 years. Does this imply that cognitive development comes to an end with children mastering reciprocity? If this is the case, it would seem appropriate to analyse national orientations as an instance of the developing individual capacity to intertwine different perspectives ('reciprocity'). A fitting conclusion from this would be to see nationalism as a form of sociocentrism, as a 'sticking to' the perspective of one's own group, which could be overcome via the faculty of reciprocity. Such an interpretation of the cognitive limitations of nationalism would leave several questions unanswered, however, such as:

- Are all social relations of the same (cognitive) quality?
- Are attachments to a family, a peer group, a club, an ethnic group and a nation grounded on the same psychological prerequisites? And would a single concept (like 'sociocentrism') be sufficient to capture this commonality?
- Is no further conceptual differentiation necessary in order to describe the adoption of group-owned attitudes and evaluations?
- Is there no differentiation to make between a subjectively comprehended adoption, mere conformity and an enforced adjustment to the group norm?
- Is children's development adequately described as a process of decentration, as an extension or expansion of (cognitive) means and possibilities, culminating in the formal faculty to 'think' relations and thus to take into account other's standpoints?

We find support for the suggested additional processes of differentiation initially in Meacham and Riegel (1978), who propose to supplement the processes of *de*centration identified in Piaget's line of research with complementary processes of *re*centration. *De*centration captures processes of expansion, sprawling, fanning out, unrolling and opening up of new possibilities. *Re*centration, on the other side, points to attachment, to bonding with particular possibilities, standpoints and evaluations. *De*centration refers to *formal processes* of evolving and developing, where *re*centration reflects grasping, entanglement and involvement with a particular *content*, a commitment to subjective bonding and tying. 'Through recentration … the individual is enabled to establish a particular subjective relation' (Meacham & Riegel 1978, p. 182). The developmental expanding of abilities and faculties is realized *simultaneously* through processes of narrowing, via social restriction and 'substantial' (German: inhaltlich) commitment; developmental expansion therefore involves

a double aspect for subjective orientation: to follow, to commit to one particular direction means simultaneously *not* to follow some other direction! Thus, development itself means the transformation of a relation.[13]

Furthermore, Meacham and Riegel propose that children's development does not stop after mastering reciprocity. To stop at this point would not allow us to grasp the ways in which adults think and act 'appropriately'.[14]

Other researchers have also rejected the idea that human development stops at a certain age, at a particular developmental stage. Before addressing them, however, I would like to begin with a few comments about the general difficulties in discussing developmental periodization by age-defined stages.

Even though I myself referred to the age of the children in the above discussion of Piaget's research, I did not intend to tie possibilities of comprehension intrinsically to particular age stages. Any link between cognitive capacities and age should be presented and discussed only with respect to a particular empirical case within a historically and societally specific group of individuals; links between psychological faculties and age stages can never be presented in the form of categorical statements, claiming validity for all individuals. In presenting the research of Piaget (and Weil), the point therefore was not to arrange children of different age groups according to the statistical distribution of cognitive, or other capacities, even if this is common practice. Rather, the previous presentation was aimed at showing that it is logically impossible to adequately take into account the relation between part and whole (e.g. with reference to social/political entities) before mastering inclusion. For the developmental goal of intertwining perspectives, as one basis for social behaviour, the mental detachment of one's standpoint is not only a prerequisite but simultaneously also the 'thinking tool' (German: Denkmittel) for this. Reference to the child's age therefore serves merely to illustrate the fact that particular cognitive capacities do not only rely on logical and psychological prerequisites but also need time to develop – time during which children are involved and participating in historical and societally specific activity contexts. It is only within these particular contexts where concrete subjects may actually realize – or in fact may not realize! – such developmental steps. In that connection, let us take a look at the short story at the beginning of the chapter told by Che Guevara's comrade Regis Debray. The

[13] From this point of view, controversies about whether the 'individual' or the 'social' is finally the starting point for child development (allegedly the issue in dispute between, e.g. Piaget and Vygotsky) seem to remain on the level of mere hairsplitting doctrinal dispute. For a more adequate approach to the whole problem area, our concerns should focus on researching and describing the specific *relation* between the individual and the social. A small child is not just *either* 'egocentric' *or* 'social' but has to develop continually from one side to the other. Every developmental step to be realized by a real child contains a particular relation between societal possibilities, hindrances and demands on the one side and subjective/individual needs and capacities on the other. This substantial (German: inhaltlich) *relation* between the *individual* and the *social* itself is actually developing in the process!

[14] Meacham and Riegel propose a further developmental step or stage where children are able to perform 'dialectical operations' by means of which individuals get access to 'dialectical thinking' (1978, p. 182).

protagonists in that story were not children, who are not yet developed enough. The story about the guerrillas and the peasants clarifies the importance of the (social and material) livelihood for developing the (individual) 'thinking tools'. The astonishment of the peasants in Muyopampa about their unknown neighbouring village 'Vietnam' points exactly to the meaning of the historical-societal basis of consciousness. If my life materializes only in my village and in its easy-to-grasp surroundings, if I don't have access to tools and practices (like writing systems, means of transportation, maps, etc.) through which I can relativize my 'standpoint', then I am also unable to make any progress towards 'decentration' to the point where I can develop and attain a notion, a concept of 'society' and 'world'. The development of the individual (child) is therefore linked in an essential way to the (development of) society itself.[15]

If decentration isn't to be conceived as a mere function of age, then we have to think about *how* (and if) changes to lifestyle and livelihood in today's world are potentially altering children's understanding of society and the world. An obvious example could be the frequent use of digital tools and media from early childhood – artefacts like computers, cell phones, etc. But we should also take into account the personal encounters children have, at school, for example, with fellow pupils from different geopolitical regions and states. In such cases the way adults respond to and support children, in answering and commenting on their questions, for example, may play a decisive part in developing an understanding of society, both for children and adults. As an illustration, we might mention the brief exchanges a former colleague had with her 6-year-old daughter returning from school where she had refugee children from the war in Yugoslavia as fellow pupils: 'Mama, Ivan comes from a country, which does not exist anymore!' And a few days later, "Mama, does a country still exist if it is bombed down" (Stüber-Hemerich 1993, p. 27)?

Third Step: Transcending Immediacy – Thinking of Society

The present section performs the third step in my presentation by now including the potential contribution of (German) Critical Psychology to our discussion. This theoretical selection does not have to do with personal preference; it is more the other way around: the inclusion of this particular perspective is the result of a failure to find any other psychological approach built around an adequate concept of 'society' as a qualitatively independent entity. The particular relevance of (German) Critical Psychology to our discussion is immediately apparent in its acceptance of the idea that the individual faculty to intertwine perspectives ('reciprocity') – as described by Piaget and others – is indeed a very crucial and necessary condition in ontogen-

[15] However, society is not (only) a 'given institution that presents itself as a lucidly given object' (Furth 1996, p. 165) for understanding and adapting to it. The 'instituted is always also a continuing instituting' (ibid.) including necessary transformations and new social forms (Castoriadis 1987).

esis. On the other hand, what could mutual recognition by reciprocal acknowledgement of standpoints mean in relation to the specifically political content of concepts such as *homeland* and *national orientation*?

To clarify the problem, let us compose a short fictitious and 'reciprocal' dialogue between a German and an Ethiopian: 'As a German I have such and such interests and standpoints in relation to you as an Ethiopian and vice versa. We respect each other. Unfortunately, despite my capacity for reciprocity, I am unable to "think" the (eventual) antagonism between my interests *as a German* and your interests *as an Ethiopian*, and therefore I cannot take your (eventual) opposing interests into consideration. I am sorry. Bye.' This made-up dialogue is designed to indicate that, with mere reciprocity as the assumed endpoint, human ontogenesis would stop too early. By themselves interindividual relations and activities cannot provide the growing child with the cognitive and emotional resources to grasp 'society' at large. If we do not artificially confine the extent of 'society' to a group (albeit a big one), or a family in which one member has to take into account the perspective of the others, then we will realize that the capacity to intertwine perspectives (reciprocity) does not represent a sufficient level of (psychological) development for dealing with 'society'. Human activity (mental as well as manual action) is not limited to interactive conjunctures and interactive-cooperative relationships. Our thinking *of* and acting *in* society requires that our developing understanding of the world transcend 'cooperative-societal mediation' (Holzkamp 1983). For H. G. Furth interindividual and societal relations are two qualitatively different realities (1996, p. 171; also 1992, p. 254). Furthermore, for Furth the difference between societal and interindividual relations is not an immediately apparent 'given' for children; their grasp of this social differentiation is the product of a successful developmental process which, in our societies, usually lasts until after adolescence. Furth states that 'there is no smooth psychological bridge from a face-to-face social situation to a societal collectivity' (1996, p. 171).

If we do not want to reduce societal relations to the immediate reciprocal influences of individuals on each other, then we cannot ignore the impact of the constellations, contradictions and responsibilities of historical forms of society on our belonging to and participation in our local groups and communities: that is, we have to take into account the 'societal mediatedness of individual existence' (Holzkamp 1983) in its psychological aspects. In the work of Piaget and others, such 'problems' might have not been so apparent since the children involved were still too young. To account for the 'empirical material' before them, it might have been sufficient to refer to the concept of reciprocity.

In its own attempt to grasp the developmental dynamic inherent in human ontogenesis, (German) Critical Psychology suggests a series of basic developmental practices or 'moves' (German: Entwicklungszug) building logically on each other, meaning that a certain developmental 'step' has to be mastered before the next 'move' can be built upon it. Two novel developmental practices are assumed as relevant for the particular period our discussion is focusing on (youth): 'transcending immediacy' and 'personal agency' (Holzkamp 1983, Ch. 8.3). The preceding

developmental moves ('generalization of meaning' and 'cooperativity')[16] had – so to say – enough 'room' to grow within the domestic range of activities. For the children making these steps, however, the 'comprehensibility' of their world remains confined within these domestic boundaries and continues to rely on cooperative relationships in the immediate life-world of their community and with the supporting adults (family or other caregivers) at home. In this 'domestic' context, the '*societal generalizable "grounds for action"* as basis for interpersonal 'understanding' (Holzkamp 1983, p. 474) may not seem to be a necessary factor in development and certainly do not appear to figure in the child's accomplishments at this age. The 'invisible whole' of society, as Piaget and Weil (1951, p. 571) call it, in both thinking and action appears inaccessible. For this social realm to open up to them, children need further real factual-social experiences which require and also support their pushing decentration forward to a new level of relations, comprehensions and grounds, but also towards a new quality of (co)responsibility which affords their being taken seriously by adults. In today's society, experiences supporting this transcending of immediacy are usually accessible to youth onward. The additional 'developmental task' that comes from such experiences involves the demand from them for the 'thinking' of this wider society. In achieving such a step, the adolescent becomes able to understand that 'immediate-cooperative "domestic" community between children and adults is *not "everything"*, but that there is something *"behind it"*, which affects it *"from outside*"' (Holzkamp 1983, p. 478).

The necessity and possibility to grasp and expand the narrow life-world constitutes the prerequisite for the developmental move to follow, i.e. for *transcending immediacy*. Transcending the familiar domain also relativizes the meaning of this domain for the orientation of the adolescent and loosens his/her subjection and dependency to closely related others. This real 'social move' forms the basis for the adolescent's overcoming of immediacy in favour of a (more) mediated relation to the world. This 'practical' transcending of his/her immediate domestic frame in the direction of broader societal contexts allows *and* requires from the child the development of an epistemic distance that enables him/her to assess his/her own relation to the world and the possibilities society/the world offers (Holzkamp 1983, p. 480). In his/her practical step beyond the narrow domestic frame, the person begins to understand where and how his/her own life-world is located, is positioned, in a broader societal context which allows and demands a new, independent consciousness about society/the world and its relation to him-/herself. In such a continual 'decentration' based on real factual-social experiences beyond the domestic life-world, the 'child/adolescent captures (no matter how "practical" or unreflected) *objective meaning references* to the *self-sustaining societal system*' (Holzkamp 1983, p. 485).

This new relating to the world and to oneself allows and requires a corresponding 'thinking' of society and the world, i.e. an abstract 'thinking', since the interests and responsibilities relating to our belonging to and acting in historically particular

[16] The intertwining of perspectives is both part and prerequisite of 'cooperativity'.

forms of society are not ‘visible’, ‘observable’ or ‘perceivable’, but are abstract. Youngsters have to overcome immediacy in order to access and master their own (new) relation to the world as a moment of the ‘overall societal mediatedness of individual existence’ (Holzkamp 1983). The abstract context of our societal existence makes it – ontogenetically – necessary to go beyond the intertwining of perspectives (‘reciprocity’) and to think, to comprehend (German: begreifen), with the use of abstract tools like concepts, our complexly mediated relation to the world, as we are ‘growing up *in* as well as *into* societal relations’ (Tolman 1994, p. 123).

L. S. Vygotsky formulates the ‘developmental problem’ for adolescents as follows: ‘The thinking of the child is not yet separated from remembering. His intellect is based mainly on memory’ (1998, p. 94). ‘Broadly speaking, the child, in perceiving, remembers more, the adolescent thinks more’ (ibid, p. 90). The realistic comprehension of society/the world, the real overcoming of immediacy, presupposes abstract concepts. In the words of Vygotsky, ‘What is new is that the adolescent’s verbal thinking itself makes a transition from the complex type to thinking in concepts, and together with this, the nature of the participation of verbal thinking in the adolescent’s perceptions also changes radically’ (ibid., p. 89). For Vygotsky, the developmental process during adolescence is driven by concept formation; Vygotsky, therefore, is attempting to draw all ‘peripheral changes in psychology of the adolescent’ (ibid, p. 121) from the function of concept formation.[17] From this point on, the adolescent can develop a concept of ‘the invisible whole’ (Piaget & Weil) of society. For Holzkamp (1983, p. 488), this is exactly the point where

> individual consciousness develops more and more clearly as self consciousness, i.e., as an instance of the first person, in which the individual no longer rises and disappears in the respective cooperative communities, but can behave as ego, not because of some mysterious potency of consciousness itself, but because of the material lift in the overall social system of maintenance, which brings together the immediately individual units of co-operation. (see also Holzkamp 1983, p. 237)

At this point of our discussion, we can reasonably put the question about the relevance and importance of the abstract conceptual thinking of adolescents for their political orientation, political learning and comprehension of society as a whole. In the formation of their political orientations, adolescents are not obliged to rely only on experiences from their close life-world. Their political orientations can also be mediated by, formed with reference to, the ‘whole of society’. Now they have abstract concepts as the necessary tools. Adolescents can reflect on ‘society’ and come to more generalized conclusions about societal issues without referring at all to their personal situation (see, e.g. Brockmeier 1983, p. 81).

However, learning from everyday experiences also brings a further novel quality: adolescents are potentially starting to reflect on their own, their personal situation in

[17] “During the transitional age, perception, memory, attention, and action are not a cluster of functions dropped into a vessel with water, not an uncoordinated number of processes, but an internally connected special system subjected in its evolution to a single law derived from the central, leading function, the function of forming concepts.” (ibid.)

relation to the situation in society as a whole. In cognizing, identifying their own interests, their own situation and the life opportunities included therein, adolescents can relate actively to 'society'. The overcoming of immediacy necessarily takes place in social context (family, peer group, institutions, media consumption, etc.). At first, adolescents can potentially just echo their parents. Gradually, however, they may discover 'content' in the statements and positions of their parents, which refers to something *not visible, not perceptible.*

This new quality in (cognitive) development does not just add something to thinking dominated by personal experience. Stepping up through the different (logical) developmental moves does not mean that preceding levels or stages fade out; these *remain* an option for me. The difference here is that as an adult I can draw the same spontaneous and random conclusions, stuck fast in local experiences, as a child might draw. The child has no alternative possibility for reasoning differently, but I do! Overcoming immediacy, as a developmental move, has as a consequence, therefore, an overall *restructuring* of adolescents' subjectivity. Any 'falling back' to (alleged?) memories or experiences from this developmental point on has, therefore, a totally different social meaning and personal sense: since the subjective possibilities at the 'higher' stage are totally different, then the subjective functionality of such 'falling back' is correspondingly totally different. If an adult behaves in an apparently 'regressive' manner by, for example, attributing responsibility for society's ills to a particular (group of) persons ("foreigners are to blame"), there is no empirical evidence to suggest psychological backwardness or developmental delay in the subject. To account for this behaviour, we would have to attempt to ascertain whether and how such an apparent 'regression' was subjectively situated in the life of the person concerned and trace its subjective sense for them. Alternatively, one might explore the possibility that such attributions were the articulation of *evaluative*, *judging* dimensions of the particular worldview (ideology?) of that person. In that case, there would be no question of psychological 'insufficiency', due to developmental delay, of the adolescents or adults; instead, we would need to consider the *premises*, limitations and consequences of the concepts and actions behind these judgements. However, how can we discuss evaluations, judgements and worldviews without also adopting an evaluative position and a particular worldview ourselves? There is no neutral, scientific 'outlook' from which to assess the insufficiencies of evaluations and postulates like 'Germany to the Germans', 'America first', etc. Any assessment of this kind is not a form of 'expertise' exercised from the lofty heights by 'specialists' in developmental psychology; it is a political discourse which takes account of the notions and understandings about society of *all* participants – including that of the pedagogues and psychologists! In this political discourse (about society), the arguments and propositions articulated by me (a psychologist) are not backed up by any 'developmental privilege'! In debating, e.g. with differently minded adolescents, I have to justify my position and explain the premises and consequences of the political positions inherent in the concepts I am using. This presupposes a quite different communicative 'arrangement' or order – but also makes it possible to build a different one.

The process, the practice of developing a 'notion' or conception about society as a whole takes some time. Over this period youngsters are confronted with and dealing with a variety of societal interpretative 'offers'; due to the concrete societal structures and thought forms (German: Denkformen) to which they belong, these interpretative 'offers' also include exhortations or inducements to the subjects to remain captive to immediacy. The overcoming of immediacy involves encounter with such forms of cognitive entrapment. Concepts like *flood of asylum seekers* (German: Asylantenflut) are examples of such popular, luring 'interpretative offers'. Dealing with them always encompasses – from the perspective of the developing child – two aspects: On the one hand, encounters with such lures represent a potential real *developmental move* and improved comprehension through reference to a broadening world. Piaget and Weil point to this direction of travel with their concept of decentration. On the other hand, *and simultaneously*, concrete societal 'interpretative offers' of this kind may also carry potential *developmental hindrances* in the shape of blurred or biased references to the world. Holzkamp (1983, p. 480) speaks therefore about 'societal mystification'.

Adolescents are growing up, starting to act in and to 'think society'. To understand the nation, the nation-state, as a historically specific (organizational) form of society ('nation form' says Balibar, 1991), as a historical-objective meaning, constitutes a pre-given task (and not only a cognitive one) for adolescents to accomplish, though they will not necessarily attain a subjective sense of the category. But in taking up this category, comprehending and using (theoretically and practically) this concept, adolescents learn to 'think society' and themselves within it. During periods of societal transformation, even if adolescents do not play an active part in such transformation, it might become important for them as social subjects to categorize and group themselves and others along ethnic or national lines. However, the historical-societal fact of 'living in a nation' does *not force* one to relate subjectively to it. Moreover, as the social reality of 'the nation' is contested, the subjective relation to the concept of 'nation' cannot but be ambiguous and itself contested. From a developmental perspective, we can thus conceptualize national orientations, nationalism, etc., as articulations of the emerging consciousness of 'societality' (German: Gesellschaftlichkeit) in adolescents, as part of their developing societal thinking in a historically concrete kind of society. Nationalism or nationalist orientation is only *one potential*[18] political form of orientation with some power in our existing societies. National orientation in adolescents in today's society can also constitute a *developmental step* forward towards transcending the immediacy of their life-world. Whether such a step is to be judged as *good*, i.e. 'patriotic', or as *bad*, i.e. 'national-

[18] This is not meant as 'rehabilitation' of the notion or concept of 'nation' by proving its developmental meaning and functionality. Any historical – even 'liquid' – societal structure needs some suitable concept, which, of course, is not a true image of reality, and it is self-understanding that 'nation' is not the same as 'single society'. *Every concept of society comprises also mystification, is therefore also false consciousness*. But the concept of false consciousness has two components, and it is not a burden for the youngsters to carry and clarify what is the *false* and what is the *consciousness*.

istic', is a matter of *controversy* and *political* debate over the very nature of our society, state or nation, or how these should be 'branded'. The positions in this political debate can never be decided or replaced by the exercise of psychological expertise, by the certification of development as 'typical' or 'deviant' or by appeal to potential psychological 'aberrations' of adolescents in their life course. Our debates with adolescents, as with colleagues, should aim at arguing for or achieving an understanding about what our society or nation is and how we should characterize it and where all such argument should lead in terms of social transformation. The contested nature of social reality cannot be harmonized by theory or resolved by harmonizing contending theories.

Scientific positions which diagnose in holders of nationalist views a lack of reciprocity in 'understanding' the standpoints of others (or which diagnose and attribute some other psychological problems to them), in fact, remain captured on the level of childish subjectivity themselves. And this is not meant at all as a 'counter-psychologization'. Assuming to explain the thinking and acting of 'nationalist' individuals only by referring to and attributing to them a childish level of reasoning does not explain anything; it does, however, make quite obvious the insufficiencies of one's own theoretical constructs. That is, it demonstrates that one has not re-enacted the 'qualitative leap' towards 'societal mediatedness' in one's *theoretical* construction. The supposed narrow-mindedness of adolescents should not prompt us to look for uncompleted developmental stages or 'regressions' in them. It would probably be much more fruitful to analyse the – common and implicit – naïve and uncritical notions and concepts about society of researchers, theoreticians and youth workers themselves. What they cannot reflect with *their* conceptual apparatus is all too easily proclaimed as deficit, as deviance within their 'research object', in our case as a developmental inadequacy in some youngsters. However, how do we – researchers and youth workers – imagine and conceive ourselves the 'self-sustaining societal system' (Holzkamp 1983, p. 485)?

> The state as organism or the family as natural germ cell of society, the afflicted societal body, the sick people's soul, etc. are all images for converting the abstract social relations within the existing conditions of production into a simple, tangible concept; with the support of equivocations constructing a relation to the - for us - known, to what is immediately accessible to our sensual experience (von Kardorff 1991, p. 56f.)

How can we imagine the development of our thinking about society differently from the 'onion layer model' implied and echoed in the term 'decentration'? How can we avoid confusing or identifying 'society' with a particular 'state'? How can we overcome restrictions in our thinking and acting relating to a single society? Moreover, what could a 'single society' be in the time of a globalized neoliberal capitalism? Any discussion of questions like these is primarily a value-laden, contested political one, and not an issue requiring pedagogical or psychological expertise, even if it relies on developmental-psychological preconditions within the discussants themselves.

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Part III
The Emerging Themes

This third and concluding part of our book serves as an introduction to Fernando González Rey's Chap. 11, 'The Two Pathways of Vygotsky's Legacy: The Critical and Non-critical Co-existing Positions in Vygotsky's Thought'.

In reflecting on the questions and issues that have been addressed in dialogue between our contributors in Parts I and II of this book, we have identified a number of important themes for further exploration and discussion that have insistently emerged within and across the theoretical and methodological divides between the two psychological traditions:

- The foundational principles, assumptions, aims and scope of 'critical' psychology' and 'cultural-historical' psychologies
- The problem of the 'scientific' status of psychology and its implications for critical and cultural-historical psychologies
- The context and rationale for the historical emergence of particular concepts in the fields of cultural-historical and critical psychology and the implications of such a historical perspective for current research in each field
- The reasons why cultural-historical psychology and critical psychology have advanced in parallel without significant contact with each other
- Ways in which cultural-historical and critical psychology can join forces to speak back to mainstream psychology on important issues and problems
- The new concepts, including subjectivity, that are emerging through productive critical development and cross-fertilization between cultural-historical and critical psychology
- Different perspectives on the actual and possible relationships between critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology
- The much-overlooked issue of the conceptions of language and communication which are often so central to basic psychological principles in both traditions

These themes, we recognize, embody a formidably ambitious agenda for rethinking the scope, boundaries and even the very validity of a separate discipline (or disciplines) of psychology. But what else could be expected in order to reorient – indeed *remake* – perspectives on our mental powers and well-being, on human moti-

vation, learning, thinking, feeling and action, that can help us, in practice as well as theory, to meet the collective challenge of finding solutions, worthy of our human potential, to the social, political and ecological problems that face us all? We may only hope that this book will provide some further impetus to address such issues within the two traditions and, perhaps, to encourage scholars to reach across the disciplinary divide in rethinking and reworking established principles and methodologies in the service of a socially relevant and transformative psychology that is both *critical* and *cultural-historical*.

In his final chapter, González Rey succeeds in demonstrating, in the most concrete fashion, the roots – intellectual and historical – of diverging pathways for psychological theorizing *within Vygotskian cultural-historical theory itself* and, at the same time, in signalling how a fragmented and disunited psychological field ('cultural-historical' versus 'critical') could be *reunified* on the basis of the conceptual reorientation begun by Vygotsky in the 2–3 years before his death. In particular, González Rey aims to show 'how some of the seminal ideas advanced by Vygotsky in "The Psychology of Art", notably *perezhivanie*, were again taken up by him in 1932, when he continued on the pathway he had begun in that book'. González Rey argues that the 'study of the motivational side of psychological systems and operations', the central focus of *The Psychology of Art*, 'disappeared from Vygotsky's work between 1926 and 1931, a period dominated by the objectivism stressed above, which was identified by Kornilov as the main characteristic for the definition of a Marxist psychology'. This objectivist, behaviour-oriented 'instrumental' perspective of sign mediation and internalization, a pathway later pursued by A N Leont'ev's 'activity theory', led to 'the omission of a social critical agenda' and to the exclusion of 'the social processes involved in the representation of childhood'. Furthermore, 'the complete omission of adult-child communication from this scheme implied non-critical consequences for both psychological theory and education'. Vygotsky's return in 1932 to the search for a holistic psychology of *perezhivanie* 'based on new proposals on issues such as subjectivity, motivation, personality and development' would allow, González Rey argues, 'a social and political agenda oriented toward advancing a cultural-historical critical proposal'.

In that light, Fernando González Rey's contribution is a fitting finale for our book. It is in itself an exemplary work of imaginative, committed, self-aware and critical scholarship which demonstrates the central importance of looking fearlessly and afresh – from the standpoint of the most pressing issues of our own time – at the life's work of those scholars on whose shoulders we wish or claim, however precariously, to stand. But it is also a resounding cry for a new era of psychological thinking, a new world of engaged psychological activity in which the socially critical, politically transformative vision of 'critical psychology' can be harnessed to the 'cultural-historical' understanding of the uniquely personal richness and complexity of human subjectivities.

Chapter 11
The Two Pathways of Vygotsky's Legacy: The Critical and Noncritical Coexisting Positions in Vygotsky's Thought

Fernando González Rey

Abstract This chapter aims to reveal some theoretical questions and concepts developed by Vygotsky that were not included in the dominant representation of his work, neither in Soviet psychology nor in Western psychology, in an attempt to find different possible paths taken by his legacy after his death and their relation to different moments in Vygotsky's work. An attempt is made to interpret Vygotsky within the legacy of Soviet psychology, bringing to light relations and processes widely overlooked within Western psychology. The chapter discusses in depth Vygotsky's instrumental-behavioral period between 1927 and 1931, which after his death was identified with his cultural-historical moment. Two different legacies of his work are discussed related to two different Vygotskyian pathways with completely different outcomes in both Soviet and Western psychology. The focus of this chapter therefore aligns with the main goal of this book, namely, the critical and noncritical implications of these two different pathways of Vygotsky's work for both psychology and social critique.

Introduction

Vygotsky gained popularity all over the world before his selected works were published in the Russian original, in what could be defined as a "Western invention myth" (Yasnitsky, 2012) and has also been dubbed the "Vygotsky boom" (Garai, L. & Kocski, M. 1995). The word "myth" in this case is not used in its pejorative meaning. Myths are inseparable from human subjectivity; they are symbolically invented constructions to which are attributed meanings that express the subjective productions of those social realities within which myths emerge. Human events and individuals are also mythologized, with both individuals and events being constructed in a way which has more to do with the myth creators than with any real

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purpose oriented toward revealing historical knowledge about these individuals and events. Myths are differentiated from history by the fact that history is in permanent movement, bringing to light new knowledge about events and protagonists, while myths are frozen and institutionalized through unchanging representations. Vygotsky, in the Western interpretation, has been used rather as a myth. His figure has been separated from his history and from the historical stages within which his work emerged.

One characteristic of politically authoritarian regimes is quick and unexplained changes in the value of ideas, facts, and individuals, a fact that has made it very difficult to work on the histories of societies ruled by such regimes. It also makes it difficult to advance the histories of their different processes and institutions, including science. With Soviet psychology specifically, important historical facts and processes in its history have only been brought to light after the changes that finally led to the end of the Soviet Union as such. Due to this state of affairs, the history of Soviet psychology cannot be used as a resource for new constructions, analysis, and reflections about its own course.

This chapter aims to reveal some theoretical questions and concepts developed by Vygotsky that were not included in the dominant representation of his work, neither in Soviet psychology nor in Western psychology, in an attempt to find different possible paths taken by his legacy after his death and their relation to different moments in Vygotsky's work.

The study of Vygotsky's legacy has been affected by several facts and interpretations that have been a particular subject of discussion by different authors in the last three decades (Leontiev, 1992; González Rey, 2011; Yasnitsky & Van der Veer, 2016; Yasnitsky, 2009, 2014, 2016, Zavershneva, 2010, 2016; Zinchenko, 1993, 2002, among others). The deficiencies and gaps in relation to the discussion of Vygotsky's work are closely related to the deficiencies and gaps in relation to the knowledge about the history of the Soviet psychology as such in both Russian and Western psychology. Nonetheless, there also facts about Vygotsky's own works that make it very difficult to study his legacy, among which Yasnitsky stressed the following: "Vygotsky has never published a book that would summarize his intellectual quest and present his theory (if only such theory ever existed) in coherent and systematic form" (Yasnitsky, 2014,p.2).

More recently, different authors have drawn special attention to the last period of Vygotsky's work (González Rey, 2011; Leontiev, A. A, 1992; Veresov & Fleer, 2016; Yasnitsky, 2009, 2012, 2016; Zavershneva, 2010, 2016). However, the link between this period and the ideas discussed by him in *The Psychology of Art* has remained beyond researchers' attention. The discussion of such a link and its consequences for the current interpretations of Vygotsky's work and for the possible unfolding paths of his legacy should be addressed.

The other direction taken by this chapter is to define to what extent, and through which constructions, Vygotsky's thought represented a critically oriented psychology and at which stages it represented a conservative psychology. It is impossible to separate an author from his/her time, because the time is always a part of his/ her subjectivity beyond intentions and conscious purposes.

The chapter intends to make evident how some of the seminal ideas advanced by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art* were again taken up by him in 1932, when he continued on the pathway he had begun in that book, and which he focused on until 1934, the year of his death. There is discussion on the strengths and deficiencies of Vygotsky's thought and the ways through which it influenced the sphere in which it has had a bigger impact – education. This treatment of his work will always refer to the periods of Soviet psychology within which it was conducted, aiming for a historical discussion with the main protagonists of those times.

The interpretation of one author is never a neutral endeavor. Authors are always interpreted through the theoretical lenses of the interpreter, as well as through the way a specific historical moment and culture are entwined, characterizing the context of such interpretation. However, in Vygotsky's case, this process was decisively influenced by the fact that he was interpreted and promoted by American psychologists, representatives of probably the most powerful psychology in the world. The institutional force of that interpretation made "their Vygotsky" become the "true Vygotsky," being naturally assumed all over the world.

The Psychology of Art as the Main Expression of Vygotsky's First Pathway

In *The Psychology of Art*, Vygotsky continuously referred to more diverse expressions of the psychology and culture of that time. The discussion opened by Vygotsky throughout the book shows that philosophy, art, poetry, sociology, and psychology are interrelated in such a way that they are a living theoretical representation for which the epicenter was human motivation and the creative character of human performance. Russian poets quoted by Vygotsky in this text did not appear in psychology or artistic magazines in the Soviet Union again for 50 years. Vygotsky's interest in the psychological functioning of the creative artist, which was a relevant precedent to approaching the study of creativity in a different way, was clear in the following statement:

> By its nature, artistic *perezhivanie* remains incomprehensible and closed to the subject in its course and essence. We never know why we like or dislike a work of art. Everything we invent to explain its influence is later thought to be a complete rationalization of unconscious processes. The very essence of *perezhivanie* remains a mystery for us. (Vygotsky, 1965, p.25; my translation from the Russian version)

Here, Vygotsky emphasizes that *perezhivanie* is not a simple "emotional experience," as is commonly assumed in English translations. *Perezhivanie* has a specific psychological nature, stressing emotions as intrinsic to the creative functions in a process that is not consciously accessible to the human being. Complex psychological networks and dynamics lie behind these inclinations and need to be studied further. From the very beginning, Vygotsky's work recognized the emotional

undertones of human actions and performances that are beyond the conscious control of the subject.

Vygotsky advanced a theoretical representation of motivation supported by the concept of *perezhivanie* as an emotional state of the creator that qualified his/her performance beyond any conscious proposal. Vygotsky seemed to worry about subjects' motivational formations rather than about psychological entities or functions. In this sense, he used the concept of *perezhivanie* to define a set of emotions inherent to human performance.

The Psychology of Art has historically been excluded as an "immature" moment in Vygotsky's work, a fact influenced to a great extent by Leontiev's introductory paper written as the preface to the 1965 Russian first edition of *The Psychology of Art*. This introduction can be interpreted as a theoretical critique of the book which, in this case, carried political connotations.

The real importance of the concept of *perezhivanie* in *The Psychology of Art* has long passed unnoticed, and many Vygotsky interpreters who are interested in the concept still do not give serious consideration to the use given by Vygotsky to *perezhivanie* in this book. It was in *The Psychology of Art* that Vygotsky highlighted *perezhivanie* as the set of emotional processes that integrates the unit fantasy-emotion as inseparable from artistic creation.

The involvement of emotions in human creation held promise due to its potential for explaining a new qualitative level of the human psyche within which emotions are inseparable from intellectual operations. This position anticipated Vygotsky's emphasis on intellectual and emotional unity that characterized his holistic period, between 1932 and 1934 (Cornejo, 2015; Yasnitsky, 2016; Zavershneva, 2016). Concentrated heavily on artistic *perezhivanie,* Vygotsky could not extend its use to other types of human performance in which the individual is actively involved as the creative subject of the action. However, *perezhivanie* was a key concept in his emphasis on the emotional side of human life.

In an audacious statement, Vygotsky defended *perezhivanie*:

> This means that in essence, all our fantasy experiences take place on a completely real emotional basis. We see, therefore, that emotion and imagination are not two separate processes; on the contrary, they are the same process. We can regard a fantasy as the central expression of an emotional reaction. (Vygotsky, 1971, p.210)

The consideration of fantasy "as the central expression of an emotional reaction" is essential because it integrates emotions with psychological functions. Such integration emphasizes the "fictional character" of psychological functions, the objectivity of which is inseparable from their cultural and emotional character. This is an argument by which objectivity could be formulated as a culturally produced concept, i.e., inseparable from human-specific processes capable of generating it. This reasoning has led us to advance on the topic of subjectivity as the link by which fictional and real become inseparable in human phenomena (González Rey, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018).

The Psychology of Art also brought to light some methodological insights that dealt closely with its theoretical proposal. Vygotsky acutely perceived that to

advance further on the questions he raised in *The Psychology of Art*, it was important to use indirect routes, analogies, and assumptions as methodological resources for following the complex processes of human creation. On this point he continued later:

> This shows that science studies not only immediate and recognized facts, but also a series of phenomena and events that can be studied only indirectly by means of footsteps and hints, and with the help of material that is not only completely different from what we study but which is often false. (Vygotsky, 1965, p.94; my translation from the Russian)

These methodological assumptions advanced in the opposite direction to the positivist path taken by the instrumental and experimental positions that characterized first the researchers of Kornilov's group and later the experimental, natural, and objective methodological orientation that characterized Vygotsky's position during his instrumental-behavioral period. In this period, Vygotsky and Leontiev were closer to each other in the study of the instrumental mediation of higher psychological functions (Leontiev, 1984).

Nonetheless, in *The Psychology of Art*, there also appeared important traces of objectivism and behavioral orientation which, in my opinion, are in contrast with the whole orientation of the book. Vygotsky sustained in this book an idea that characterized all of his works in different periods; this was his identification with an objective psychology, within which he identified a Marxist psychology: "American behaviorism, German Gestalt psychology, reflexology and Marxist psychology, are all oriented to one general tendency of current psychology, to objectivism" (Vygotsky, 1965, p. 26 – my translation from Russian).

The Instrumental-Behavioral Period of Vygotsky's Work: Higher Psychological Functions as Higher Forms of Behavior

The study of the motivational side of psychological systems and operations disappeared from Vygotsky's work between 1926 and 1931, a period dominated by the objectivism stressed above, which was identified by Kornilov as the main characteristic for the definition of a Marxist psychology. Vygotsky's theoretical platform in this period and those theoretical constructions that were the focus of his thinking were explicitly developed in his book, *The History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions*. The book was his best known and most widely used in teaching his ideas during the period in which the interpretation of his work was controlled by Leontiev and his group.

Vygotsky's main goal in the book was to demonstrate that he treated higher psychological functions in a non-differentiated way, with the concept of higher human behaviors having its focus on stressing the mediation of behaviors through artificial means, which was the main characteristic of higher human behaviors or functions, and the basis for understanding the cultural character of human development. Following this line of reflection, he stated:

> It was difficult to expect that the use of instruments would be differentiated from that of organic forms of adaptation, not leading to new functions of behavior. But this new behavior that appeared in the historical development of humanity, which we conventionally call higher behavior in order to differentiate it from biological forms of development, unlike the ways in which biological development occurs, should surely have its particular, specific process of development, with its own roots and paths. (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 30)

Following the prior line of reasoning, Vygotsky claimed:

> The concept of higher psychological function, the object of our research, embraces two groups of phenomena, which at a first glance seem to be equivalent, but which really represent two different phenomena, two paths in the development of higher psychological functions, closely interrelated with each other, but never mixed with one another. On the one hand, there are processes of assimilation by external means of the cultural development and thinking – through language, writing, drawing, mathematical operations; on the other hand, there are processes of development of special higher psychological functions… attention, logic, memory, formation of concepts etc. Taken together, these form what we have conventionally named as processes of the development of higher forms of human behavior. (Vygotsky, 1983, p.24)

From the paragraphs above, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, Vygotsky's main interest in that period of his work was the relation between culturally acquired external means of mediation of cultural behaviors as the main attribute of what cultural development means; secondly, both resources taken together defined what he termed as higher forms of human behavior. Behavior and functions appear as one and the same thing. Behavior, and not activity, was the main concept on which Vygotsky's new ideas were founded. This period represented the closest approach between Vygotsky's and Leontiev's positions, with the latter as a disciple of the former (Leontiev, 1984).

Achieving a historical balance concerning that moment, Zinchenko stated: "Priority was given to reactology, with its disdain for problems of consciousness, and to psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the study of unconscious" (Zinchenko, 2012, p.50). A critical analysis of this period of Vygotsky's work implies overcoming the representation that has dominated the interpretation of him all over the world, which identifies this "instrumental period" as his mature work, overlooking the pre-instrumental and post-instrumental periods of his work.

Being closer to animal and behavioral psychology, even though his main goal was the development of a cultural representation of human development, he initially worked with concepts and studies that had a behavioral approach. So, starting from the animal psychologist, G. Jennings, Vygotsky used the concepts of "systems of activities," stating:

> By this term he (Jennings – my note [FGR]) defined the fact that means and forms of behaviors available to each animal represent a system conditioned by the animal's organs and organization… Human beings are not an exception to Jennings's general law. Human beings also have their system of activities that rests on the basis of the limits of their behavioral means. But human beings transcend all of the animals by the fact that they extend their radio of activities through instruments. (Vygotsky, 1983, p.32 – my translation from Russian)

So the comparison between human beings and animals is based on a "system of activities," understood as a repertoire of behaviors common to both human beings and animals, with the only attribute that differentiates them being the artificial instruments created by culture which, in the case of human beings, mediates behaviors.

Based on the integration of both systems of activities in ontogenesis, Vygotsky came to his next general conclusion about cultural development:

> If, in human biological development, the organic system of activities is hegemonic, on the other hand, in historical development it is the instrumental system of activities that prevails. If, in phylogeny, consequently, both systems split and develop independently of each other, in ontogenesis the two systems integrate with each other, leading to joint development of the two processes in the development of behavior. (Vygotsky, 1983, p.33 – my translation from Russian)

In fact, Vygotsky was talking about the system of behaviors as the main core of human development. The system Vygotsky advanced was completely different system from that defended at the same time by Rubinstein with his definition of activity. Through activity Rubinstein aimed at transcending the natural study of psychological functions and the dichotomy between stimulus and response. Activity allows the understanding of consciousness, sensuousness, and environment as an inseparable unit, having as its basis a dialectical comprehension of the integration of culture and life, as defined through the principle of the unit of activity and consciousness, the epicenter of which is the individual as agent.

Tools and signs appear to be automatically associated with behavior. The first focuses on the contact that humans have with nature, and the second focuses on controlling our own behaviors, as well as that of others.

> The tool serves as a guide for the influence of men on the object of their activity; it is directed outward, toward the external, and it must cause some changes in the object, representing a device of external activity addressed to dominating nature. The sign does not change anything in the subject of the psychological operation; it is a means of psychological influence on behavior, external or internal, a means of internal activity and of control of behavior; the sign is oriented inwards. (Vygotsky, 1983 a, p. 90; my translation from Russian)

In his analysis of higher psychological function, Vygotsky focused on the use of various means as devices of behavioral control; this is the source of the identification between higher forms of behavior and psychological functions. The concept of higher psychological function is always defined by a behavioral operation. As he stated:

> If we strain to synthesize the various forms of development of the higher psychological functions described in the previous chapters, it is easy to perceive that there is a general psychological characteristic inherent in each of them, which seems transitory to us but which is defined by a feature that distinguishes it from the rest of the psychological processes. All of these processes are processes of control of our particular reactions with the help of various means. (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 273; my translation from Russian)

Psychological functions automatically emerge through behavioral operations. Vygotsky subordinated his conception of higher psychological function to the

objective psychology centered on behavior proposed by Kornilov at that time. Vygotsky analyzed not only lower but higher psychological functions as forms of behavior (Matiuskin, 1983; Seniushenkov, 2006).

Matiushkin, who wrote the afterword of *The History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions*, highlighted:

> Vygotsky undoubtedly took an important step forward to show the specificity of the higher forms of human behavior, which allowed him to represent entirely new forms of one of the aspects of human behavior. (…) This step forward was made with the introduction of the stimulus means for the control of behavior. Therefore, he conducted his analysis with the use of the general outline of stimulus–response. (Matiuskin, 1983, p. 342–343; my translation from Russian)

At that time, even speech was treated as a behavioral device by Vygotsky. Speech was not discussed as a process of communication but as behavior: "Speech, for example, is one of the powerful means of influence on the behaviors of others, which, in the process of human development, acquires means to support the behavior of others" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 279; my translation from Russian).

As has been recently discovered in the work on Vygotsky's family archives, Vygotsky in 1932 was critical of his definition of psychological operation.[1] Vygotsky sketched in his preparation for this research meeting: "We focused attention on the sign (on the tool) to the detriment of the operation with it, representing it as something simple" (Zavershneva, 2010, pp. 41–42).

The notion of mediation, taken together with the concepts of sign and tool, represented the theoretical core of this instrumental period, being part of a theoretical scheme centered on behavior and its control. The signs and tools, as mediators of psychological functions and external operations, respectively, represented artificial ways of acting on stimuli to change and control human behavior. Once again, Vygotsky stated:

> Our behavior is one of the natural processes whose fundamental law is that of stimulus-reaction, and so the essential law of control of natural processes is our domain through the stimulus. It is not necessary to guide any behavior toward life; let to the behavior creates the corresponding stimulus. (Vygotsky, 1983, p.278; my translation from Russian)

The subject of behavior disappeared in this instrumental and operational period of Vygotsky's work, which is the reason why concepts such as mediation, internalization, signs, and tools emerged as central to behavioral regulation, instead of being resources of the agent of the behavior. The picture drawn by Vygotsky at this time was completely centered on assimilation, adaptation, and control.

Most Western interpretations of Vygotsky are based on an incomplete understanding of Vygotsky's historical work, and, under the enchantment of the "semiotic boom" in the 1980s, some mistaken conclusions were quickly advanced about the use of semiotic devices by Vygotsky. The culture in Soviet psychology at that time had little to do with semiotics, as was clearly noted by Leontiev, who stated: "it was

[1] This information was taken from Vygotsky's record entitled "Symposium," December 4, 1932 (Taken from Zavershneva, 2010).

necessary to find in behavior, in human reactions, what is specific for human beings, what consistently permits to differentiate human behavior to be differentiated from that of animals" (Leontiev, A. N, 1994, p. 263).

In an effort to discuss Vygotsky's concepts in the theoretical framework within which those concepts emerged in Soviet psychology, Seniushenkov stated:

> For us to talk about "external" processes is to talk about "social" processes (Vygotsky, 1983, pp. 144–145). From this definition, it is possible to observe that in 1931 Vygotsky began to consider the idea of the 'transit of the actions to the internal plane', a topic that had not occupied a place in his work previously. Another problem began to be more important for him at this time: the problem of the acquisition of new cultural forms of behavior. (Seniushenko, 2006, p.140; my translation from Russian)

This first time that Vygotsky turned his interests to the "transit of the actions to the internal plane" is important for the continuing legacy of Vygotsky's work and something that had no relevance for the concepts of higher psychological functions and higher forms of behavior in the years before. Vygotsky began to plan a new period in his life in Leningrad, after Rubinstein's invitation to occupy Basov's chair in the Herzen Pedagogical Institute in 1932. Practically no one has drawn attention to this interesting historical fact and its relevance to the third period of Vygotsky's work.

Paradoxically, it was Rubinstein (1889–1960) who was probably the Soviet psychologist who most quoted Vygotsky. This paradox resulted from the fact that Rubinstein was formally treated as being opposed to Vygotsky by Leontiev and his followers. There were over 30 references to Vygotsky by Rubinstein in the 1940 edition of the *Foundations of General Psychology* (Frazer & Yasnitsky, 2015).

When psychological function is reduced to behavioral control, the cultural character of the artificial mediator paradoxically transforms this control into a universal human function, which homogenizes the diversity of culture. The definition of psychological functions, as given by Vygotsky in *The History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions*, should be considered as an "instrumentally mediated theory of human behavior" rather than a "cultural-historical theory."

Social relations and communication were completely ignored by Vygotsky during his instrumental-behavioral period. This was the period in which Vygotsky and Leontiev were closest, a relationship that began to break down from the establishment of the Kharkov group in 1930 (Zinchenko, 2002, 2012). What characterizes human dialogical communication is its creative-generative character and not mediation. It is the continuous and simultaneous creation of fictional realities in culture and in the human mind in a process in which both these instances are equally implied and mobilized.

Both Soviet and Russian psychologists reacted critical to the instrumental period of Vygotsky's work (Ananiev, 1977; Abuljanova, 1973; Lomov, 1978, 1984; Rubinstein, 1946). Most recently, other Soviet psychologists have criticized Vygotsky's instrumental account of communication. Smirnova stated that:

> Therefore, for Vygotsky and his followers the adult only acts as mediator between the child and the culture, as an abstract 'carrier' of signs, norms and forms of activity, but not as a

> living concrete person… the process of communication itself was not subject to inquiry in the cultural-historical approach. (Smirnova, 1996, p. 87; my translation from Russian)

The emphasis on the semiotic character of Vygotsky's work camouflaged his clearly defined behavioral orientation and contributed to the myth of his use of semiotic mediators. During his "instrumental period," Vygotsky drew attention to the mediator as a source of stimulus for a new kind of human behavior, instead of articulating a new definition of psychological functions centered on the mediator. Vygotsky uses signs as mediators of the higher psychological functions, defining words as the main mediator for analyzing a range of distinct psychological functions.

According to Yasnitsky:

> Thus, in a document titled "Consciousness without word" that Vygotsky scribbled presumably in mid 1932 he unambiguously critics the previous focus on functions and regret his ignorance of the systemic approach that as we now know (Yasnitsky, 2012) – he borrowed from the works of German – American scholars of gestaltist and holist orientation. (Yasnitsky, 2014, p.4)

In my opinion, that change described by Yasnitsky in Vygotsky's orientation was also influenced by his close relations in those years with Rubinstein, whose representation of the unity of consciousness and activity had a clear holistic orientation. The vagueness of Vygotsky's theoretical definitions in this period was also expressed by his naïve empirical methodological orientation at the time (Vygotsky, 2012). In 1932, Vygotsky not only expressed a radical theoretical change but also reviewed his epistemological and methodological reorientation during his instrumental-behavioral period:

> Our deficiency is not a deficiency of facts, but the untenability of the theory: in the analysis of our crisis this is the main difficulty, but not a departure from the facts. This is contra A[.] N. [Leontiev]. Consequently, salvation is not in the facts but in the theory. (Zavershneva, 2010, p.54)

Could this instrumental period of Vygotsky's work be considered as a type of critical psychology or as a premise for advancing a critical psychology? This period represented the peak of the relationship between Vygotsky and Leontiev as master and student. However, the differences between them began when the Kharkov school was created and Leontiev began to criticize Vygotsky for the use of language as a mediator of behavior. I consider that this was the more conservative period of Vygotsky's thought. This conclusion rests on the following arguments:

– First, the omission of a social critical agenda: The positions developed by Vygotsky in this period were strictly related to an individual general psychology of childhood. The instrumental-behavioral character of these positions led to exclude the social processes involved in the representation of childhood and to universal explanations of child development based only on instrumental mediation as the main feature distinguishing between animal and human child behaviors. The multiple social relational processes within which child development takes place were omitted, and consequently also omitted were the social and

political sides of such social and institutional processes within which these relations occur.

– The ontological emptiness of the concept of higher psychological function indifferently used by Vygotsky in relation to higher human behaviors and the complete omission of adult-child communication from this scheme implied noncritical consequences for both psychological theory and education. From a theoretical point of view, all the psychological concepts began to be explained through the behavioral, operational, and objective version of activity developed by Leontiev who, ignoring the first and latter periods of Vygotsky's work, overemphasized his instrumental-behavioral period. In education, assimilation was considered the corner stone of learning processes and development; an adaptive and submissive individual was pursued as is clearly expressed in the next quotation, representing the positions of Leontiev and his closest followers in the sphere of education: "Psychical development takes place in a process of assimilation of the socio-historical person's experience… It should be emphasized that the process of "assimilation" should not be opposed to the process of "development" because the first appeared as the general way of realization of the second" (Davydov, Elkonin, Markova, 1978, p. 182 – my own translation from Russian).

The main critical implications of Vygotsky's instrumental-behavioral period were related to what, at the time, was called "defectology," understood as the field of child psychology dedicated to working with children who carried different types of physical defects and their sensory and intellectual functions.

Vygotsky's reorientation in 1932 toward a holistic approach to human beings was accompanied by his renewal of interest in the motivational side of human processes and by his search for the unity of intellectual and affective processes. This began a very new, ephemeral, but very creative period of Vygotsky's work, which was characterized by a different psychology, which later led to a new path in the interpretation of his work that followed by L. I. Bozhovich and her group.

Coming Back to Some Topics of *The Psychology of Art*: Advancing on New Topics and Concepts Between 1932 and 1934

In the last 2 years of his working life, Vygotsky was very productive and active, coming back to a more systemic representation of the human mind and centering on the search for new psychological units, on which to advance a new representation of human consciousness (Leontiev, 1992; Zavershneva, 2016). F. T. Mikhailov may have best characterized this new stage of Vygotsky's work between 1932 and 1934, when he stated:

> Here we have a logic of self-development of life not a reaction to external stimuli. It is not for nothing that today no one so thoughtfully knows all (I emphasize all!) the works of Vygotsky. And I could demonstrate to my few readers that strikingly profound philosophical

literacy of the author. But this no longer has any bearing upon the myth of cultural-historical psychology. (Mikhailov, 2006, p.41)

Despite the increasing number of works published since the 2000s that have employed the new concepts Vygotsky brought to light in that last stage of his work (Fleer & Quiñones, 2013; Fleer, González Rey, & Veresov, 2017; Veresov & Fleer, 2016; González Rey, F, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2017a; Miller, 2011; Mikhailov, 2006; Zinchenko, 2002, 2007), I have noticed that those concepts, particularly sense and *perezhivanie,* continue to be used without new theoretical advances capable of integrating them into a new theoretical system. Mikhailov noted in the quotation above that Vygotsky did not address new specific questions in that last stage of his work. He aimed to advance a new theoretical representation of psychology that was able to follow the creative subject and the processes of self-developed life. The new concepts that emerged at that time – sense, *perezhivanie*, and social situation of development – address this issue.

In 1931, Vygotsky published "Imagination and creativity of the adolescent," which gave continuity to his *The Psychology of Art* agenda. Vygotsky did not write about imagination or creativity between 1926 and 1930. In this 1931 text, it is still possible to see remnants of a behavioral language and the main location of a given external reality from the prior period of his work.

However, it was with the publication of his "On the question of the psychology of the creative artist" in 1932 that Vygotsky definitively returned to the agenda inaugurated by him in *The Psychology of Art*, bringing back the person, and not the function, to the center of his interest. The most important point in this work was to recognize the active-generative character of emotions that emerge as the inseparable core of psychological systems and not as external and isolated emotional states: "... emotions come into new relationships with the other elements of psychical life, new systems appear, new blending of psychical functions; units of a higher order emerge […]" (Vygotsky, 1984a, p. 328; my translation from Russian).

We are confronted with a different language in relation to the instrumental-behavioral period of his work: "new systems, units of a higher order, and new blending of psychical functions." Vygotsky is advancing a new ontology of psychological systems understood as motivational systems, as would be exemplified by the new concepts of this final period of his life such as sense and *perezhivanie,* the latter defined as the unit of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1984b).

This new set of concepts developed by Vygotsky between 1932 and 1934 advanced a new theoretical representation addressing the definition of psychological unities and locating them within psychological systems in processes that are responsible for the emotional side of the psychological operations engaged in human performances. Vygotsky advanced psychological realities that emerge not as a result of an external experience but as new psychological ways of feeling, imagining, and thinking reality. "So, in *perezhivanie* we are dealing with an invisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the *perezhivanie*" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 342).

The unity between personal and situational characteristics does not exist in the world but only in the way we live our human realities as symbolical emotional realities.[2] Nevertheless, the topic of symbolic realities still had not entered Soviet Marxist philosophy or the psychology of the Soviet period (Zinchenko, 1993).

Through the new concepts he employed during this period, Vygotsky provided evidence that a new psychological system was in its genesis. His health failed at that moment in his life, as he was ill as a result of very advanced tuberculosis, and these relatively new ideas were still not assembled within a new model of thinking within which they could be interrelated to bring to light a new representation of consciousness. He could not clarify further the consequences of those new concepts introduced in the last period of his work, such as sense and *perezhivanie*, for topics such as consciousness, human development, and human creativity, which were particularly relevant for him at that time.

At this stage of his work, Vygotsky also focused on the study of thinking in a different way from his previous works. In *Thinking and Speech*, he stated:

> Among the more basic defects of the traditional approaches in the study of psychology has been the isolation of the intellectual from the volitional and affective aspects of consciousness. The inevitable consequence of the isolation of these functions has been the transformation of thinking into an autonomous stream. Thinking itself became the thinker of the thoughts. Thinking was divorced from the full vitality of life, from the motives, interests and inclinations of the thinking individual. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 50)

Taking this path, Vygotsky emphasized the comprehension of psychical functions as functions of the subject, instead of his prior identification of psychological functions as instruments of higher forms of human behavior, as he did between 1926 and 1931. Thinking is not an isolated function; it is expressed through other psychological processes, which actively involve the subject in his/her "full vitality of life" during the intellectual operation. This quotation revealed at the same time how far Vygotsky was at that moment from assembling his new concepts of sense and *perezhivanie* into his more general theoretical representation; these concepts were used by him to express that "full vitality of life."

In that last moment of his work, Vygotsky attempted again to advance the *integral* study of individuals, coming back to his early interest in emotions and creativity. The concepts of a word's sense and *perezhivanie* could be used to open new avenues in a representation of the human psyche. Nonetheless, these concepts were largely ignored within the dominant representations of cultural-historical psychology. The concepts and topics through which these last 2 years of his life bring back some of his first intuitive ideas from his early works, mainly from *The Psychology of Art*, represented an important premise to advance the topic of subjectivity from a cultural-historical standpoint with all the critical consequences it can open for a cultural-historical critical psychology.

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[2] In our definition of subjectivity, symbolical processes and emotions are inseparable, forming a new unit, subjective senses, whose emergence signals a new qualitative unit in which emotions become symbolic processes and vice versa, having its own mode of functioning that is beyond any conscious control or intentions.

Final Remarks

- The main ideas and concepts that connected Vygotsky's first seminal ideas in *The Psychology of Art* with some of the concepts developed by him between 1932 and 1934, and particularly those of sense, the social situation of development and *perezhivanie*, deserve to be discussed in depth, given the new alternative perspectives that could emerge from this discussion for the development of new theoretical paths in the cultural-historical approach.
- The different pathways of Vygotsky discussed in this paper have brought to light two completely different approaches to psychology. The first of these pathways was first articulated in *The Psychology of Art* and was a nondeterministic, nonmechanistic comprehension of psychological functioning, represented by concepts that could define the emotional-intellectual character of human performance. The second agenda was the opposite of this. Between 1926 and 1931, Vygotsky's work centered on behavior, with its main proposal being the evidencing of the difference between animal and human behavior.
- Further advance of the topics discussed here would allow for the development of arguments that have remained underdeveloped in cultural-historical psychology. The theoretical framework that was foregrounded and discussed above misunderstood new proposals on issues such as subjectivity, motivation, personality, and development, which would allow a social and political agenda oriented toward advancing a cultural-historical critical proposal.
- One important thing that should be emphasized is that these two contradictory agendas are grounded on different representations of psychology, with completely different consequences and implications for discussing new theoretical and methodological paths within Vygotsky's legacy. Neither of Vygotsky's agendas discussed in this paper should be ignored, and it is important to accept a "behavioral Vygotsky," one that in Western interpretations is defined as the Vygotsky of "semiotic mediation."

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