

Vygotsky's Concept of *Perezhivanie* in *The Psychology of Art* and at the Final Moment of His Work: Advancing His Legacy

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses Vygotsky's definitions of the concept of *perezhivanie*, its contradictions, and gaps. The concept of *perezhivanie* was first discussed by Vygotsky (1965) in *The Psychology of Art*, and later in 1933–1934 he returns to its discussion. The different meanings of the concept are discussed throughout the present article. Despite the vagueness in the definition of the psychological nature of *perezhivanie*, the ideas developed by Vygotsky regarding this concept represented an advance in the study of motivation and psychological development in Soviet psychology. At the same time, the concept was an important premise for the study of subjectivity.

Introduction

The concept of *perezhivanie* was first discussed by Vygotsky (1971) in his foundational work *The Psychology of Art*. This book was overlooked for a long time in Soviet psychology as a result of the dominant objectivism that prevailed in this psychology. Because it was read through the theoretical lenses of Leontiev and his followers, who for decades monopolized the legacy of his work, some ignored the relevance of the concepts developed by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art* and in his last works, among which were the concepts of *perezhivanie* and sense.

In the last 10 years, however, the concept of *perezhivanie* has increasingly been the object of attention from many researchers (Fakhrutdinova, 2010; Fler & Hammer, 2013; Fler & Quinones, 2013; González Rey, 2009; Smagorinsky, 2011, among others), mainly as result of the increased interest in the topics of emotion, motivation, and subjectivity within the cultural-historical approach. However, as was common in Vygotsky's work, especially with the concepts developed by him from 1932 onward, the concept of *perezhivanie* that was used by him had different meanings at the first and the last moments of his works. At the end, the precise definition of the psychological nature of *perezhivanie* remained open and incomplete, just as was the case with the concept of *sense*.

The present article aims to discuss *perezhivanie* as it was treated by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art* and in his last writings, mainly in *The Problem of Environment* and in "The Crisis at Age Seven." Vygotsky's definition of *perezhivanie*, along with other key concepts, signaled the emergence of a new representation of the human psychological system. The concepts that Vygotsky directly related to *perezhivanie*, as well as those that could be related to *perezhivanie*, but were not used, are also discussed because of their relevance to understanding gaps in Vygotsky's understanding of *perezhivanie*. The present article discusses the potential that *perezhivanie* offers for the development of psychological theory, as well as its insufficiencies.

The concept of *perezhivanie* in The Psychology of Art

Despite Vygotsky's *The Psychology of Art* having been largely ignored in both Soviet and Western psychology, this book has been one of the more important contributions of Vygotsky to the development of psychology.

In *The Psychology of Art*, *perezhivanie* was introduced simultaneously with the concepts of emotions, creativity, motivation, and the person as creator, as the subject of the artistic performance. The motivational side of artistic performance appeared to be Vygotsky's focus in this moment of his work, as well as the individual in his or her involvement with this performance.

Vygotsky utilized *perezhivanie* in a slightly different way from how the word was understood in Russian. Vygotsky defined *perezhivanie* as the emotion that characterizes the creative artistic performance, which also involves talent and operational processes. On the basis of this intrinsic relation between operational processes and emotions, it is possible to think about a new definition of a psychological function, thinking of it not as an instrumental process, but as a "function of the subject," organized as the indivisible unity of intellect and affect. Defining emotion as intrinsic to artistic performance, Vygotsky implicitly defined artistic performance as the motivation for its own realization. The concept of the "function of the subject" prevailed in this definition over the concept of function as an instrument, which is the position that has frequently been associated with Vygotsky (Bruner, 1985).

However, despite the recognition of the emotional character of *perezhivanie*, Vygotsky differentiated emotion from *perezhivanie*:

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 later invent to explain its influence is 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 Russian)

Vygotsky defended the unconscious character of *perezhivanie* that allows the concept to be considered a psychological formation,¹ rather than a process. As he stated in the preceding quotation, the essence of *perezhivanie* remained a mystery to him, and this mystery remained until the end of his life. Vygotsky never offered an ontological definition² of the concept, which, to a great extent, was the cause for the multiple meanings the concept had at different moments of his work and for the multiple interpretations of *perezhivanie* until today. The lack of a definition of *perezhivanie* also makes it difficult to define the difference between *perezhivanie* and other concepts that were used by Vygotsky at the same time.

One of the strong points raised by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art* was to recognize the value of emotions as human reality, which overcame the logical and intellectual reductionism that has characterized psychology until today. He clearly expressed this position:

... all our fantastic [and unreal] *perezhivaniya*, 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 rightly regard a fantasy as the central expression of an emotional reaction. (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 210)³

The definition of emotions being as real as any other human phenomena implies the recognition of the specificity of a human psychological world that does not have an immediate and natural relation with the external reality in which the human action is placed. This statement recognizes the specific character of human emotions as inseparable from imagination and fantasy in creative

¹Vygotsky used the concept of psychological formation in his definition of imagination during his "Lectures in Psychology," specifically in the lecture devoted to "Imagination and Its Development in Childhood." The concept of imagination appeared to indicate more complex psychological formations.

²I consider as ontological the specific theoretical representation through which one system of facts becomes a signified system susceptible to certain methodological procedures (González Rey, 2015, p. 17).

³I have used the English edition of *The Psychology of Art* (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 210) after comparison with the original version in Russian from the 1965 edition of *Psychology of Art*.

performances. Emotion was not defined any longer as an isolated and secondary process, but as a process closely integrated with other ones, part of the most relevant human performances. *Perezhivanie* was closely related to this emphasis given to emotion by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art*.

Because of the vagueness of the definition of *perezhivanie*, it is possible to raise the question of why Vygotsky did not consider *perezhivanie* as the unity of imagination, emotion, and fantasy. Since the beginning of his work, Vygotsky was clear that the complex unity of emotion, imagination, and fantasy had a decisive relevance for the comprehension of human psyche; however, he did not advance a concept able to integrate those three processes. This unity appeared as a strong intuition of his thinking in *The Psychology of Art*.

A weighing of the concept of *perezhivanie* as it appeared in *The Psychology of Art* allows us to make several assumptions.

First, the concept of *perezhivanie* was closely associated with Vygotsky's idea that psychological functions in the creative performances always embody the emotion-imagination unity, on the basis of which *perezhivanie* could be considered an indicator that psychological functions are not instrumental functions, but functions of the subject in its affective-volitional expression. This idea was not advanced further; however, it represented an interesting provocation in a psychology ruled by a strict rationalism.

Second, the concept of *perezhivanie* in *The Psychology of Art* represented a first step toward a potentially new definition of motivation. The idea that motivation is external to psychological functioning was replaced by the idea that motive is the emotional-intellectual organization of the proper psychological function involved in the creative performance.

Third, *perezhivanie* advanced the idea that human motivation was essentially an unconscious process. This idea was influenced by Freud; however, in contrast to Freud, Vygotsky associated *perezhivanie* with nonuniversal human forces and defined this concept in close relation with action. Furthermore, his concept was differentiated from the Freudian concept of unconscious motivation by the fact that Vygotsky never considered psychological functions to be motivated by universal impulses.

Vygotsky's interest in more systemic psychological concepts able to explain sentiment and fantasy was clear in this statement from *The Psychology of Art*:

It is necessary to say, however, that there are not two more obscure topics than these two [Vygotsky is referring to sentiments and fantasy] and although they were subjected to more development and examination in recent times, at least until today, unfortunately, we have not any general recognized and elaborated system for the study of sentiments and fantasy. (Vygotsky, 1965, p. 256; my translation from Russian)

Perezhivanie was intrinsically associated with motivational processes at this first moment of Vygotsky's work. Vygotsky emphasized that there was not any elaborated system for the study of sentiments and fantasy; one of the options for advancing this system is to elaborate on the topic of subjectivity, as is discussed next.

Final moments of Vygotsky's work: The emergence of perezhivanie within a new theoretical system

Between 1932 and 1934, Vygotsky returned to his foundational agenda in *The Psychology of Art*. Once again, the concept of *perezhivanie* appeared relevant, this time within a new group of concepts, such as sense and the new definition of thinking as a function of the subject. *Perezhivanie* was intrinsically associated with the concept of the "social situation of development."

In this last moment of his work, Vygotsky stressed comprehension and generalization as essential for the emergence of *perezhivanie*, a position unlike the one in *The Psychology of Art* and one that was criticized by Bozhovich (1968) as intellectualist-reductionist. The following statement is a clear example of Vygotsky's position:

At the age of seven years, we are dealing with the onset of the appearance of a structure of *perezhivanie*, in which the child begins to understand what it means when he says “I’m happy,” “I’m unhappy,” “I’m angry,” “I’m good,” “I’m bad,” that is, he is developing an intellectual orientation to his own *perezhivaniya* (...) Generalization of *perezhivaniya* or affective generalization, the logic of feelings—appears at the beginning of the crisis at age seven. (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 291)

In the preceding statement, Vygotsky identified *perezhivaniya* as affective generalizations, subordinating the relevance of the emotion to the comprehension of the emotion by the child. Rather than being articulated with other emotional-intellectual functions such as imagination and fantasy, *perezhivanie* is referred to now as the intellectualization of emotions.

This intellectual reductionism in the comprehension of emotion not only created difficulties in explaining the relevance of emotions as self-generative processes (as the concept was coined by Vygotsky in 1932), but also led to a narrow representation of the emotional relevance of the relation between the child and the adult since the early moments of their lives. “Let us say that the child does not talk before he is a year old. When he starts to talk, the speech environment of those around him remains unchanged” (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 293). From this statement, it is possible to conclude that language is only relevant due to its meaning, which is profoundly contradictory with the concept of sense. Vygotsky argued:

A word’s sense is the aggregate of all the psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word. Sense is a dynamic, fluid, and complex formation which has several zones that vary in their stability. Meaning is only one of these zones of the sense that the word acquires in the context of speech Ultimately, the sense of a word depends on one’s understanding of the word as a whole and on the internal structure of personality. (Vygotsky, 1987b, pp. 275–276)

The difference between meaning and sense becomes clear in the preceding excerpt. At the same time, sense appears to be a unit of consciousness for its capacity to integrate “everything in consciousness which is related to what the word expresses.” Among these different psychological facts that arise in consciousness as a result of the word, intellectual and emotional facts can be included. Maybe that statement represented the most obvious attempt by Vygotsky to consider the unity of affective and intellectual processes.

Vygotsky stressed the comprehension of the word, as well as personality, on the basis of sense. Therefore, comprehension appears here as inseparable from the internal structure of personality, which might lead to thinking of psychological functions as sense functions. However, this conclusion must be inferred by the reader, because Vygotsky was never explicit when he referred to the relation between these concepts during the final stages of his work.

In “On the Question of the Psychology of the Creative Actor,” Vygotsky (1999) seemed to get closer to a new definition of emotions as intrinsically associated with other psychological functions, attributing to them a generative character that does not depend on intellectual operations, as stressed in the next statement:

In the process of social life, feelings develop and former connections disintegrate; emotions appear in new relations with other elements of mental life, new systems develop, new alloys of mental functions and unities of a higher order appear within which special patterns, interdependencies, special forms of connection and movement are dominant. (p. 244)

From this quotation, it is clear that Vygotsky is treating emotions as independent from intellectual operations. Their psychological status is similar to those of other elements and functions of psychical life, as a result of which their new associations and integrations lead to new psychological systems and to the emergence of units of a higher order that could be considered as being intellectual-emotional units. However, Vygotsky did not develop this idea further in his work.

His definition of thinking as inseparable from emotions is oriented toward the same meaning given by him to the emotion as inseparable from other psychological functions. He wrote,

Among the most basic defects of traditional approaches to 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 thoughts. Thinking was divorced from the full vitality of life, from the motives, interests and inclinations of the thinking individual. (Vygotsky, 1987b, p. 50)

Vygotsky understood thinking as a function of the subject that could not be divorced from the “full vitality of life.” However, the concept of *perezhivanie*, which could be used as a synthesis able to express the “full vitality of life,” was not brought by Vygotsky to this reflection. The inseparable integration of thinking, emotions, imagination, and fantasy, which expresses the history of the individual as thinker, is clearly embodied in one of the many statements given by Vygotsky on *perezhivanie*:

On the one hand, in *perezhivanie*, environment is given in its relation to me, how I *perezhivat* this environment; on the other hand, features of the development of my personality have an effect. My *perezhivanie* is affected by the extent to which all my properties and how they came about in the course of development participate here at a given moment. (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294)

Reflecting on this quotation, it is not difficult to represent the act of thought precisely as the “full vitality” of life that emerges as the psychological unit within which the thought takes place at the present minute. We can see the affinities of sense and *perezhivanie*, which advanced simultaneously in Vygotsky’s work without any reference of one in relation to the other. The immaturity of these definitions is clear by the absence of links between them and with other theoretical constructions that were simultaneously advanced by Vygotsky at the time. Both sense and *perezhivanie* appear as an aggregate of facts: sense as the aggregate of psychological facts that arise in consciousness as result of the word, and *perezhivanie* as the aggregate of all of the characteristics of the personality with all of the characteristics of the environment.

Vygotsky explicitly defined *perezhivanie* as the unit of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294), but, in my opinion, *perezhivanie* must be understood as the unity of environment and personality. As Vygotsky (1998) stated,

The child’s *perezhivanie* is also this kind of very simple unit [*edinitsa*], about which we must not say that in itself it represents the influence of the environment on the child or individuality of the child himself; *perezhivanie* is a unit [*edinitsa*] of personality and environment as it is represented in development. (p. 294)

Vygotsky could not define the new quality that emerges in *perezhivanie* as a unit, to differentiate it from the two systems involved in its genesis, and for these reasons he appealed to the formula: “all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in *perezhivanie*” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 342). What does this mixture of characteristics mean? How does this mixture of characteristics work psychologically? I think that these questions do not have an answer. This mixture is not a unit according to Vygotsky’s definition of what a unit is.

Vygotsky referred to the *perezhivanie* more by its function than by its psychological nature. He noted,

therefore, it is not any of the factors in themselves (if taken without reference to the child), which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factor refracted through the prism of the child’s *perezhivanie*. (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 340)

Perezhivanie as just defined is a psychological formation of personality, the unit formed in personality as result of the social influence that cannot be taken in its absolute attributes, as Vygotsky stated. This definition permits us to overcome the concepts of reflection, internalization, and social determinism. *Perezhivanie* appears as being the singular way in which the children perceive and feel social influences. Instead of simply internalizing social influence, it becomes relevant to the child from a psychological point of view once it is embedded in the child’s personality through *perezhivanie*. Vygotsky used personality to refer to the idea of psychological system, but, in his use of the concept, he remained in the old idea of personality organized by personal characteristics without specifying the psychological nature of these characteristics.

What does the critique addressed by Vygotsky to the understanding of environment as an absolute mean? It means to consider the environment not as a given objective reality, but as a relative reality with an influence on psychological development that is possible only through *perezhivaniya*. However, the understanding of how a social influence is refracted through a *perezhivanie* implies understanding *perezhivanie* as a formation of personality organized during the ongoing action in which the individual is engaged at the present moment, that is, *perezhivanie* must emerge as part of a personality, as part of a psychological system that cannot be identified with the external influence. However, Vygotsky did not specify why personality is different from the social influences and once again overemphasized the role of consciousness in the impact of the social influence on the child. “The environment determines the type of development depending on the degree of awareness of this environment which the child has managed to reach” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 346).

The heuristic value of *perezhivanie* is based on new alternatives that can be opened on the basis of the concept for the understanding of psychological development. The internal resources of the child are decisive for the emergence of a *perezhivanie*. The environment is not understood any longer as influencing the development from outside.

In this final moment of his life, Vygotsky developed concepts that signaled his interest by the definition of new systemic psychological units, but he could not define the psychological nature of these units, a fact that explains the gaps in these concepts for advancing new theoretical constructions with regards to human motivation, personality, and psychological development. The concepts that suggested new psychological units were left as aggregates of different facts, without specifying new qualitative systemic units.

Advancing the legacy of perezhivanie: Subjectivity from a cultural-historical standpoint

As previously discussed, among the most pertinent theoretical avenues created by the concept of *perezhivanie* is its usefulness in transcending the definition of environment as a system of external influences. The concept of *perezhivanie* is defined as internal in some of the references of Vygotsky to this concept as, for example, when he stated,

The restructuring of needs and motives and the reevaluation of values are basic factors in the transition from age level to age level. Here, the environment also changes, that is, the relation of the child to the environment. Other things begin to interest the child, he develops other activity, and his consciousness is restructured, if we understand consciousness as the relation of the child to the environment. (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 296)

The essential fact of the transition from one age to the other is located by Vygotsky in the changes of internal psychological processes from which the changes of the environment take place. However, consciousness is defined here as the relation between the child and environment, not as a psychological system, as consciousness seemed to be defined by him through the notion of sense. These contradictions and gaps with regards to psychological concepts impede Vygotsky from advancing in defining the psychological nature of consciousness and on the ontological definitions of the concepts developed by him at the final moment of his work.

Approaching that contradiction in Vygotsky’s work, I attempt to fulfill the ontological vacuum left by Vygotsky in his more complex concepts through a new definition of subjectivity that has been possible only on the basis of its comprehension as a cultural, historical, and social production. Subjectivity as defined here permits us to specify the psychological nature of the psychological system and many of its processes and functions.

The understanding of subjectivity from a cultural-historical perspective demands an advancement of the studies on the concepts of *perezhivanie*, sense, and “social situation of development,” and the recognition of human psychological processes and formations as subjective productions defined by integrative emotional-symbolic synthesis capable of expressing the multiple experiences as they are lived by the individual in different moments. These processes are responsible for the way in which lived experiences are felt, re-created, imagined, perceived, thought, and invented for the individuals.

The realities within which the human processes occur are cultural, subjective realities and not objective realities that carry out universal values independent of the ways in which they are felt and lived by individuals.

The development of the topic of subjectivity requires consideration of the relevance of the symbolical processes and realities as essential from a cultural-historical standpoint. Only the symbolical processes, by their plasticity and their inseparable integration with human emotions, allow the integration of the multiplicity of emotions and symbolical unfolding of one experience in one unit. The definition of this unit is the basis of our proposal of subjectivity. The human subjective processes are never moved by one final cause and do not represent stable contents; they flow in time, integrate, and unfold into different forms during the same experience.

Taking into account the prior considerations, what type of concepts would be necessary to advance the study of subjectivity? In our opinion, these concepts must have the following characteristics:

- First, they must represent symbolic-emotion units. It is necessary to understand the intellectual processes differently from the way in which these processes were treated in Soviet psychology and to advance a new comprehension of these processes within the “full vitality of life” as it was defined in relation to thought by Vygotsky. This integration of the “full vitality of life” in the study of the intellectual functions requires a completely new understanding of what “intellectual” means. Intellectual functions must be understood as complex subjective formations within which intellectual operations are inseparable from emotions and from other symbolic-emotional processes such as imagination, fantasy, and other symbolic-emotional productions capable of embodying the history and the current context of life of the person as the subject of intellectual functions.
- The concepts used for the study of subjectivity must be capable of simultaneously advancing subjectivity both as a process and as dynamic configurations able to take different forms during the flux of human action.
- Subjectivity is not a fact that determines the action; it represents the actual psychological nature of the action as defined by Rubinstein in his formulation of the principle of the unity between consciousness and activity.
- The concepts used in the study of subjectivity must be capable of integrating a subject’s lived experiences from the past with the imaginative ideas of the future into the present. These experiences would not appear as a sum of lived experiences, but as new symbolic-emotional productions based on these lived experiences, which represent new imagined experiences regarding them. These processes are always behind consciousness, which represents an epistemological and methodological challenge.

Our proposal regarding subjectivity is based on theoretical concepts that, in their interrelation, permit advancement on the legacy of the concepts of *perezhivanie*, sense, and social situation of development using new approaches. The concepts of our proposal are subjective sense, subjective configurations, subject, and social and individual subjectivity. Ultimately, I do not believe that *perezhivanie* is a useful concept for psychology, although it retains great importance in the history of cultural-historical psychology.

Subjective senses represent a constant flux of symbolic-emotional chains that characterize human experience. In our definition, the symbolical and emotional processes are organized in subjective units defined as subjective senses. Subjective senses have an ephemeral existence within the chaotic movement of the subjective configurations that human experience represents; in this chaos, one subjective sense unfolds into other senses in an endless process. Thus, for example, an expression of the affection of a father to his son can provoke multiple subjective senses that will be responsible for the affective relevance of his father’s expression. If this son feels he is inferior to his brother and exhibits jealousy and rejection toward him, he can feel the expression of love from his father

motivated by pity toward him and not as an authentic affection. This subjective production is as real as any concrete object in the world, and it represents the symbolic-emotional realities that characterize human mind and culture.

Subjective senses, in this example, are multiple, and they do not appear in words, but as snapshots of symbolic-emotional flashes. These flashes follow one another and can be represented in different ways, such as memories of the father's behaviors that took a new subjective sense at this moment, feelings related to his mother as the only person that really loves him, and emotions that resulted from the feeling that he never achieved the admiration of his father. These feelings do not appear in words, and each feeling appears closely related to multiple symbolical expressions. This unit is configured by multiple unknown emotions, perceptions, memories, and imaginary constructs organized as the subjective senses on which the perception of his father is felt and represented by him in that particular moment. This subjective unit is the subjective configuration.

In the comprehension of how a social experience influences an individual, it is impossible to select the objective elements responsible for our psychological position, which is why in real experiences the imaginary productions of the individual are responsible for his or her behaviors. The concrete influences of the present time are always perceived through subjective senses that integrate the present time, the past, and the future in one tissue of interwoven symbolical processes and emotions. As a result, expressions and behaviors that are not justified by the present objective appearances of the present given situation emerge from this tissue.

Subjective senses always imply different and simultaneous processes; one emotion evokes a perception that, in turn, leads to a thought, which evokes new emotions in a complex chain that are beyond the conscious representation of any immediate given situation. The individual is usually aware of the representation on which his or her ideas are organized; however, the complex symbolic-emotional organization within which these ideas are developed remains hidden from his or her consciousness.

This flux of subjective senses that characterizes human experiences as such is organized as subjective configurations, which are responsible for the dominant psychological processes embodied in human actions and performances. Unlike *perezhivanie*, the definition of the subjective senses emphasizes not the unity of the environment and the features of the personality; subjective senses are the unit formed by the symbolic processes and emotions, a unit that is intrinsic to human beings, representing a subjective production, not a refraction of the external. At the same time the subjective senses are beyond any conscious representation, as *perezhivanie* was defined by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art*, changing his position in "The Crisis at Age Seven."

The concept of subjective configuration facilitates an understanding of subjectivity in two levels: social (social subjectivity) and individual (individual subjectivity). There is no relation of determinism of one upon the other; however, there is a recursive relation that enables an understanding of how each level is configured into the other through specific subjective senses. Subjective configurations never express directly the nature of the subjective senses configured in them; they are a new qualitative level of integration of the subjective senses, able to generate new subjective senses according to their own organization. These complex processes enrich themselves through the imaginative creativity of the subject and can be studied not by inductive-descriptive methods, but by constructive-interpretative approaches, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of the present article.

According to this theoretical account, psychological functions turn into functions of the subject. However, the concept of the subject in our theoretical proposal is understood as the individual or group that opens new paths of subjectivation in the normative spaces within which the individual and social actions occur. Being a subject is a qualitative attribute of the individuals and groups that is not inherent to them, but that qualify their actions in some contexts. The subject is active in his positions and decisions. Each decision is subjectively configured; however, at the same time, it represents a new source of subjective senses. The individual is an active moment of the subject's subjectivity; he or she thinks, feels, imagines, and generates perceptions and fantasies, which

continuously generates processes of subjectivation that are inseparable from the subjective configurations that embody their different mental functions and actions.

The concept of subjective configuration permits the study of the multiplicity of subjective senses that embody the simultaneous effects of lived experiences, which taken together with the subject's subjective creations lead to new subjective realities in which "the external social influences" become unrecognizable. The subjective senses generated by the subjective configurations do not represent one more psychological process; they are the dynamic force of the intellectual productions and actions of the subject, which imply the lack of existence of pure cognitive processes, as it was anticipated by Vygotsky in his comprehension of the thought. Pure cognitions only characterize formal activities without emotional involvement.

Subjective development occurs through subjective configurations able to mobilize different psychological processes, the integration of which represents new qualitative moments of individuals. There are no criteria external to the individual capable of explaining its development, which is the more important legacy of the concepts of *perezhivanie* and "social situation of development." Each individual develops her- or himself in the moments of life in which new subjective configurations emerge that are capable of mobilizing into its unit many new subjective resources, which lead to qualitative changes that extend to different areas of the individual and social life instances. These changes are the sensitive moments of subjective development.

This proposal of subjectivity emphasizes the generative, imaginative character of the different human psychological processes and cultural productions. This approach represents an attempt to overcome the notion of objectivity, understood as the determination of psychological processes and formations by immediate external facts and objects, which remains widespread among some authors who follow Vygotsky's positions in psychology.

Final remarks

In both moments of Vygotsky's work, the concept of *perezhivanie* marked a transition in his work. The elements on which this estimation is based include the lack of definition of the psychological nature of *perezhivanie*, the different meanings attributed to this concept throughout Vygotsky's work, the lack of definition of the psychological system in which the psychological unit would become *perezhivanie*, and the lack of interrelation between *perezhivanie*, as well as other concepts that Vygotsky simultaneously used at the moments in which he used *perezhivanie*.

At this moment, the concept of *perezhivanie* is important essentially because of its historical significance. It expresses, as demonstrated in two moments discussed in this article, a set of concerns of the author that indicates a thought in transition toward a different psychology, which the author did not develop further. Nevertheless, the concept represents a new starting point, one that cannot be used at the present moment in the form in which Vygotsky left it.

In *The Psychology of Art*, *perezhivanie* referred to the wholeness of human actions and performances in the art. Later, in Vygotsky's final works, *perezhivanie* was defined as a unity of human development. It was defined as inseparable from the concept of "social situation of development" in such a way that *perezhivanie* emerged as the new psychological unity that determines the relevance of a given social influence on a child's development.

Despite the vagueness of its definition, *perezhivanie* was a useful concept because it permitted the questioning of certain principles that had ruled Soviet psychology for a long time—the principle of reflection, immediate social determinism, and the concept of leading activity as the cornerstone for the comprehension of psychological development. Because *perezhivanie* emerged from the relation between a social influence and the child's personality, it represents both concepts as a relation that does not enable any external process or object to be considered the leading role in subjective development.

As a result of the gaps in the definition of *perezhivanie*, and based on its provocative presuppositions, it is possible to develop the topic of subjectivity in such a way that the unfinished legacy of

perezhivanie is advanced. The approach to subjectivity discussed in this article aims to advance this legacy on the basis of the symbolic-emotional units that are organized as subjective senses and subjective configurations. This opens space for the integration of singular paths of human existences as the basis on which the social networks that characterize human experiences are implicated in the generation of subjective senses that become the basis for understanding subjective development.

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