

## **An Hermeneutical Approach to Vygotsky: between the archeology and the possible**

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**ABSTRACT – An Hermeneutical Approach to Vygotsky: between the archeology and the possible.** This text is about two constitutive movements in Lev Vygotsky, perceived in two of his works: *Mind in Society, the Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (2000) and *Thought and Language* (1991). These movements can be said as *archeology in movement* and *opening of the possible*. Through the first one, we follow a return toward ontogenesis and phylogenesis of the dialectic process of development and learning. Through the second one, we perceive the meaning of education inscription, especially on the *Zone of Proximal Development*, with all the methodological and practical consequences brought by it. The methodology used is a bibliographic research conducted under the inspiration of Paul Ricoeur's Critical Hermeneutics.

**Keywords: Language. Development. Learning. Archeology. Possible.**

**RESUMO – Aproximação Hermenêutica a Vygotsky: entre a arqueologia e o possível.** Este ensaio trata de dois movimentos constitutivos em Lev Vygotsky apreendidos por uma incursão em duas de suas obras: *O Desenvolvimento dos Processos Psicológicos Superiores* (2000) e *Pensamento e Linguagem* (1991). Tais movimentos podem ser ditos como *arqueologia em movimento* e *abertura do possível*. Pelo primeiro, acompanhamos um retorno na direção da ontogênese e da filogênese do processo dialético de desenvolvimento e de aprendizado; pelo segundo, apreendemos o significado da inscrição da educação sobretudo na *Zona de Desenvolvimento Proximal*, com as consequências metodológicas e práticas que isso implica. A metodologia que utilizamos é a pesquisa bibliográfica conduzida sob inspiração da Hermenêutica Crítica de Paul Ricoeur.

**Palavras-chave: Linguagem. Desenvolvimento. Aprendizado. Arqueologia. Possível.**

## Introduction

This is a brief approach to Vygotsky, mediated fundamentally by two works by the author<sup>1</sup> and aided by the critical insight of interpreters of his thought<sup>2</sup>. As an approximation that is done as writing, it is something posterior, posterior of a double movement: affection in belonging, and reflective detachment, as taught by Paul Ricoeur<sup>3</sup>.

If we think *in* time, this does not mean that we are *within* time, only distended to the past in a retrospective look and immersed in a present that would make us prisoners of immanence. We are also, *in* time, the opening and we can walk in the anticipation, in front of the possible that, when pulling the gaze prospectively, brings light on the immediate and past time. It seems to us that life, individual history, history with others is much more than immediacy. Vygotsky is still *in* time today because he has not yet finished telling the gaps that his gaze detected in human becoming. To make *a* work survive and *make it live* for over eighty years after he died is a *sign* of beyond time by the reflective incidence that his work operates in the *here and now* of our time.

In Vygotsky there is a *wise cleverness*. In effect, on the one hand, working for a country - his country - fresh out of a Revolution that did not simply change or replace men and groups in social *places*, but which overturned the organization, institutions and referential horizons of a culture; working for a country where the State takes the reins of actual life and, implicitly, the task of forging another life from other references, in particular, on the Marxist bases; working for an almost illiterate country in its entirety and to realize the insufficiency of the sciences of time to anchor this cultural turn; working for his country, seeking to build a *medium* that could give rise to the fruitful and durable emergence of a revolution far beyond the spheres of economy and politics. On the other hand, make a long foray into the mind sciences and educational practices of Western culture and see the need for an *overturning*, from Psychology and Education on new philosophical foundations, to weave the present and the future, opening new possibilities; to perceive in this *overrun* that, in fact, the question of exits was in a kind of *return to the things themselves*, deep and at the same time simple to be fertile and operational. In short, that another education was needed to educate a *nation* in another way. To beget it was a great wisdom.

Concerning cleverness, it refers to the certainty that its fundamental theses, although many of them were based on Marxist presuppositions, went beyond these very foundations and implied a revolution of socio-economic-political Marxism itself. The incursion into *language* and the assertion of its main place in the advent of the *human* along with the *work* – and perhaps even more than the work - the cleavage of education in the singular subject and not in the class – long before Agnes Heller criticizes the basic contradiction of Marxism (Heller, 1989)<sup>4</sup> – are two of the vectors that demand of Marxism new reformulations in its foundations and the certainty of its reductions. Certainly, Vygotsky

knew that he was greater than the ideology/utopia he served; and certainly, he also knew that it was somehow worth it.

Perhaps it is more fearful for capitalism today and then, not the fact that Vygotsky is an immediately post-revolutionary soviet, but that his work is revolutionary. There is, in our view, an anthropological power that mediates in education and which confronts the very principles and needs of capitalism: competition between men, individualism as a mentality and as a way of life, the presumed *ideological neutrality* of knowledge and so on. The place of the *other* as immediate presence, the advent of psychological functions as an *inter-psyche* and *intra-psyche* process, the signs and meanings that socially constructed language carries and its differentiated internalization, the attention to the development process of each child as someone singular and unique are dangerous offenses to capitalism and go beyond the main Marxist theses.

With this, it is easy to understand why the most specific problems that these two works deal with (perception, attention, memory...) are not of much interest to us yet, but *the movement* in question, the great theses of Vygotsky about the dialectical override movement of human maturation in which is realized, within time, what he calls *psychological functions*. It is in this sense that we find in the author an *archeology in movement* of human development, a process whose advent has its conditions of possibility (ontogenesis) and whose happening is always done in a dialectical set of mediations (phylogenesis). Accompanying this movement, we will have occasion to find the *openings* that still provide what to think today and that are part of the fecundity of a thought that still surpasses borders.

### ***Archeology in Movement***

Certainly, all appropriation finds its limits, but is not invalid only by its limits. The human condition is like this: a continued saying and doing in somewhere, and from somewhere. This does not mean affirming the relativism or relativity of everything; truths, universals, existing human beings are lived and found in the singular. Finding and telling the truth is the pretension underlying all science and all other knowledge, and all science is also said and done from somewhere. Here we refer to a hermeneutical appropriation, as a recollection by a subjectivity that interprets, of the *world* opened by the books, a world that suspends the references of a reader who finds himself metamorphosed when reading the work<sup>5</sup>. In fact, all writing is always of the order of sharing. What is at stake is the intersection of worlds, of the world said by one who writes *to another*, of the world open in subjectivity that affects the world that someone has brought to *my* eyes. Even if it is a work of mathematics, we never escape the metamorphoses in ourselves. And sometimes the *other* says in the writing to be able to better clarify *himself*.

In this sense, we list some of the theses that are central to the *world* that these two works of Vygotsky carry and offer. It is a *first-order appropriation*: it wants to apprehend the *archeology* in movement of

human behavior in its origin and in its development from the author's own saying. It wants to clear the razor's edge that the author lives by approaching development and learning as two irreducible vectors of all *human* education. It wants to understand the intrinsic relationship between *human* development and language.

Vygotsky's explicit purpose in writing *The Social Formation of Mind* is quite this: "[...] to characterize the typically human aspects of behavior and to develop hypotheses on how these characteristics form throughout human history and how they develop during life of an individual" (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 39). This course of the author goes through a critical resumption of the history of psychology in which he realizes that many questions are poorly presented or poorly answered, using incompetent experiments to account for what effectively happens in human development. From Stumpf, Kohler, Buhler, Shapiro and Gerke, Guillaume and Meyerson to Piaget, despite their differences, in all of them remains the great difficulty of clarifying the "[...] interaction between speech and practical reasoning throughout development" (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 43). In many of them there is the attempt to elaborate animal experiments in the hope that the conclusions drawn from these experiments can be transposed to the comprehension of human behavior. This, according to the author, is a totally wrong way. And here is a decisive statement: "[...] speech plays an essential role in the organization of higher psychological functions" (Vygotsky 2000, p. 45). Many of the psychologists – and there is a profound and *special* critique of Piaget – when they attach importance to signs in human development, they prefer to interpret them as an exercise of the pure intellect rather than as a product of the child's developmental history.

For Vygotsky, it is necessary to look at the dialectical unity between the development of intelligence and other higher functions and the use of signs. In fact, if we turn our gaze on the *course* of human development to its *origin*, we will realize that, *from* the beginning, language and practical activity converge: there is a unity between perception, language and action, a unity that is lived differently in unfolding of the child's development in time, with the advent of new psychological functions. The *course* of development shows from the beginning that:

The specifically human capacity for language enables children to provide ancillary tools in solving difficult tasks, overcoming impulsive action, planning a problem-solving before its execution, and controlling its own behavior. Signs and words constitute for children, first and foremost, a means of social contact with others<sup>6</sup> (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 53-54).

In this sense, language has two constitutive and overlapping functions: cognitive and communicative; they are the basis of every higher form of activity in children and it is through these functions of language that the child is distinguished from animals. This is indeed decisive: if language is at the basis of child development – from the beginning and throughout the course of history – if language comes to the

child through the presence of *others*, then the development of the child's higher psychological functions is linked to social behavior and shows the rooting of individual history in social history. It is, therefore, within a historical community constituted and mediated by language that one must seek the understanding of the *human* becoming of the child.

Higher psychological functions, in other words, perception, sensory-motor operations, attention, memory and thought are seen by Vygotsky as a dynamic system of behavior. Such functions relate and change throughout development; the advent of one does not negate the presence and importance of the other. In the *course* of the child, functions come with time, an accomplished function prepares another that comes and takes the former with it and, as we shall see, is deeply linked to the learning triggered in the contact with *others* under the *medium* of language. Thus, for example, the immediacy of perception is supplanted dialectically by a complex process of mediation.

For the author, the advent of speech is indeed essential in the development of the child. In fact, the process of speaking modifies the way of perceiving, allows the overcoming of its immediacy by the use of gestures and signs. The use of a system of signs allows the child to restructure the totality of the psychological process, making it possible for her to be able to progressively dominate her own movement and to make the choices become *her* own choices.

Mediated by the indicative function of words, the child begins to dominate her *attention* and new centers are created in the perceived situations in which the own perception undergoes reconstructions. The child creates a temporal field in which she perceives changes in the immediate situation in such a way that she can distinguish the distance between her past activities and those of the present. This distance is procedurally traveled by the advent of *memory*: through the mediation of speech, the temporal field of action of the child stretches back and forth and memory comes to unite past and present. The process of development up to this point has given rise to a psychological system in which two new functions are performed, that is, the *intentions* and the symbolic *representation* of these intentional actions. And voluntary activity will produce changes in the child's needs and motivations.

From Vygotsky's many *experimentations* with children at different ages, some synthesis, he said, were established. Indeed,

[...] the activity of using signs in children is not invented or taught by adults; rather, it arises from something that is not originally an operation with signs, becoming such an operation after a series of qualitative transformations. Each of these transformations creates the conditions for the next stage and is itself conditioned by the preceding stage. In this way, transformations are linked as stages of the same process and are, as far as their nature, historical (Vygotsky 2000, p. 79).

This is the fundamental law of development. It is therefore a dialectical process that produces *its* results, the qualitative transformations that are not introduced from outside of the development process.

This leads Vygotsky to thematization of the ontogenesis of the development process. For him, there are two origins of this process: a biological and a socio-cultural. The history of a human being, since his appearing, is actually the history of the *intertwined development* of these two origins of behavior. This means that the history of each one is the result of the intertwining of the organic arrangement of the biological root with the use of instruments and human speech whose root is historical-cultural. And the accompaniment of the historical course of the dialectical process of development of each one (phylogenesis) shows that between the early moments and the higher moments, many psychological systems of transition occur and the relations between the functions change in the same course of development. It also shows that the potential for complex sign operations already exists in the earliest stages of individual development.

This adherence of historical and dialectical materialism in the understanding of human psychological development leads Vygotsky to also deal with the question of the method of inquiry of this same development. In fact, if “[...] the psychological development of men is part of the general historical development of our species” (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 98), then we must consider that *nature acts on man and man acts on nature by creating the conditions of his existence*. The use of instruments to transform nature according to a purpose proper to each human being<sup>7</sup> and the use of signs for the meaning of nature and the transformations that man operates in it – the movement of *language* – mediate human becoming in history and make appropriation something always touched by the community. This reference, for the author, must be instituted as the *methodological principle* for all psychological experimentation.

This will imply simply reversing the focus of research or the direction of the look as well as the *modus operandis* of scientific work. Instead of the centrality of the object, that of the process. Instead of the phenomenal description, the explanation by the genesis. Rather than crystallized behavior, behavioral becoming and fossilized behaviors, those that either have faded in history or become automated. The starting point of any investigation must always be the understanding of the present in the light of the history of functions, starting with the most rudimentary, with special attention to the basic requirement of the general dialectical method: the process of change.

Openly disagreeing with Piaget, James and Koffka, Vygotsky advances toward a different conception of the relationship between development and learning. And here surely one of the greatest contributions of the author is found, both in Psychology and in Education, as well as in what concerns the relation between them. In relation to Piaget, a disagreement about the assumption that the processes of development of the child are independent of learning; a disagreement over the non-

influence of learning in development; a disagreement as to the maturation *per se* of the psychological functions, having as a marker – although not unique but incisive – the *age* of the children (Vygotsky, 2000)<sup>8</sup>.

Regarding to James, Vygotsky's criticisms are fundamentally two: first, the established identity between learning and development. Second, the simultaneity of the occurrence of both. In relation to Koffka, the criticism is about his attempt to combine the extremes, in which learning and development influence each other, but with development having prominence over learning: development is always greater than learning, as if the child took two steps in development and one in learning.

For Vygotsky, it is necessary to look for the general relation and the specific relation between development and learning. The starting point here is the fact that children begin to learn and develop long before they attend school, which shows that development and learning are interrelated from the first day of life, always mediated by language and presence of adults. If this is so, then what needs to be done is to discover the *actual* relationships between them and how each one is realized.

For the author, there are two levels of development. The first is the level of *actual development* or level of development of the child's mental functions that have been established as a result of completed development cycles; by this level, we can know what the child can already accomplish *by herself*. The second level is what the author calls the *zone of proximal development*: it is the distance between the actual level of development and the level of potential development. It is important to consider that in addition to what the child can do by herself, the importance of what the child can do if she is *helped by adults* or in collaboration with peers already at *another level* of development. For Vygotsky, this is much more decisive in indicating the child's mental development: the ability to learn can vary in children at equal levels of actual development. The difference lies in the *zone of proximal development* of each one.

Thus, if the child can do this or that by herself, it is because the functions for that have already matured in it. On the other hand, if the child still cannot do it by herself, those functions have not yet matured, they are in the process of embryonic maturation, buds of development, not fruits<sup>9</sup>. In other words, the *level of actual development* characterizes mental development *retrospectively*; in turn, the *zone of proximal development* characterizes the mental development *prospectively*.

Through the *zone of proximal development*, we can follow the internal course of development, the already consolidated processes and the maturing processes beginning to develop. We can delineate the immediate future of the child and her dynamic state of development and provide the child with access to what is in the process of maturation. This simply implies that there are *equal* cycles of mental development and *different* internal dynamics. Hence: "The state of mental development of a child can only be determined if its two levels are revealed:

the level of actual development and the zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 134).

Until then it is still the development seen as itself. From the above, how is the relationship with learning? “Human learning presupposes a specific nature and a process through which children enter the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 135-136). This means that there is no development without learning; learning comes before, it advances development. The learning awakens several internal processes of development that come to operate only through the interaction of the child with people in her environment and in cooperation. Once internalized, such processes are part of the child as acquisitions of independent development (functions that mature each other).

The author, however, warns: learning is not development. It is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of development of culturally organized and specifically human psychological functions. Learning, so to speak, causes the advent and maturation of functions. In other words, learning and development do not coincide, are not equivalent, nor parallel. The development process progresses more slowly and behind the learning process; learning goes happening and bringing the development process. And from this *sequencing* results the *zone of proximal development*, where it is necessary to *provoke* the becoming of new learning for the becoming of the development. In this direction, we understand Vygotsky’s proposed method, the *functional method of dual stimulation*: proposing tasks beyond what the child is capable of and introducing neutral stimulus from which the child appropriates as a sign to solve the task.

Thus, if learning is what pulls development and if learning always takes place in the mediation of culturally woven language, then language is the paradigm from which it is possible to see the dynamic relationship between development and learning. It is in this dynamic relation that education and the use of educational methods inscribe themselves.

If language is the *medium* of learning and development in the child by the incision of the provocation in the *zone of proximal development*, then another archeology is needed, a backward journey in order to recover the history of the process of development of signs *in the child* (new ontogenesis and new phylogenesis). In this walk on history one must always remember that language, especially spoken, permeates the entire process, the child lives in it, it is the basis for the advent of any sign *in the child*. For Vygotsky, such a history begins with the gesture as a visual sign, advances by the child’s ability to scribble, progresses in toy games where one object can symbolize another. When the spoken language has become costumery in the child, the history of the sign advances by the drawing, of actual things and of lived meanings. The child then discovers that in addition to drawing things, it is also possible to draw the speech, which we call writing. Hence, the secret of teaching writing goes through this sequential course. The consolida-

tion of the capacity of writing leads the writing to become, in the child, the symbolism of the first order.

But in this dynamic resumption of the development of signs in the child, there is another element observed by Vygotsky as decisive: he calls it the *children's needs and motives for action*. And it is from the *game* that this element is apprehended. For the author, playing is not simply an activity that gives pleasure to the child, but fulfills a need for it, a motive; the game is a form of activity that fulfills needs and an incentive that moves the child to act. Says Vygotsky (2000, p. 141-142):

[...] if we ignore the needs of the child and the incentives that are effective to put it into action, we will never be able to understand its progress from one stage of development to another because all progress is connected with a marked change in motivations, trends and incentives.

To detect the importance of either game you need to look at the needs. Many games supply, thorough imagination, needs that are unrealizable in life with *others*. Imaginary situations are part of the emotional atmosphere of the game itself; it is by the imaginary situation that the child learns to direct her action by the meaning of the situation. Linked to the needs of the child, the game creates a *zone of proximal development* in it so that the child becomes greater than she is, goes beyond herself by the creation of new situations in thought.

Let us turn now back to the question of the history of language in the child, bringing together the importance of looking at her needs. In fact, the advent of reading and writing only occurs, according to the author, if reading and writing become necessary for the child, as relevant to her life. If they do not become necessary, intrinsic to the child, they will simply have no meaning for her and, if they are learned, they will be mechanically done. Teaching from necessity is to teach *naturally*. The best method for teaching reading and writing is one in which children discover these skills in play situations. Drawing and playing are the preparatory stages for the development of written language and reading in children (Vygotsky, 2000).

### **Hermeneutical Openings of the *Possible***

If, on the one hand, we find in Vygotsky an *archeology in movement* to apprehend the process of development in the *medium* of the dialectical historicity of language, on the other, we also find an *opening of the possible*. Not necessarily a possible only *within* his work, but also *from* it. We have, then, from here, a *second-order appropriation*, operated by an exercise of reflective detachment.

Among many openings, especially pedagogical, that Vygotsky gives us to think, it seems to us that – as Paul Ricoeur<sup>10</sup> says, and keeping us in his company – the *narrative function* fills to a large extent the theses we have explained above. Indeed, if in Vygotsky language is the *medium* of every human advent historically and culturally constructed; if

the presence of *others* who are at an advanced stage of development pull forward the human development of children (and of any human being at any age); if all learning is put as a way beyond the already consolidated development; if the learning that pulls the development towards its maturation in more advanced stages occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development; if the learning that takes place in this zone looks like to lead the child to be more than she already is; then it seems to us that *the narrative function largely fulfills – and, of course, not exclusively – this dialectical movement of change from one stage of the development of higher psychological functions to another*. This is the thesis that we will explain hereafter reflexively.

In fact, why do children, at all ages, like the adults – or at least older children – to tell them stories and narratives about the past? The narrative is fundamentally an exercise of language, primarily of spoken language which, according to Vygotsky, permeates every process of *inter-* and *intra-*psychic development of the child. Teaching history and telling stories to the child is simply decisive and even necessary: it is to set in motion a *sonority* of meanings historically elaborated by a community, a set of values, norms, and expressivities that relate to the very identity of the community; a lot of learning has taken place there. It is putting into practice what is *already happening* on in the life of relationships, and at the same time suspending the present time by introducing an additional aspect that the community *does not yet* live. It is to set in motion a look of *recovery* of a *process* lived in what it has fundamentally in *common*, but also in what it has of *singular*, and at the same time a look of *glimpse* of new figures liable to be incarnated by the human beings in their personal and collective history.

Telling stories and teaching history to children is engaging them in a plot that *locates them for themselves* and gives them the *certainty of being overcome*. Narratives have the power to introduce intrigue into the lives of anyone, especially the child. The child, as it looks like, enters a game of relations and meanings and become an active participant in a plot of which she does not yet know the outcome. In this sense, narratives of the real or of the fictitious are a great game that stresses the needs and motivations of the child, recovers fossilized needs and motivations, distends those that are current and increases the content of the powers of those who still sleep or throb their time of irruption.

Narratives are, in fact, a complete exercise of language, coming first and going beyond spoken language. In fact, a narrative told, to produce effects or to increase them, uses *gesture*, *scribbles* in the air with the force of the actions of the characters. It makes use of the often-symbolic *drawing* of the faces and actions of those who live the plot. It *describes* inner processes that transform outer behaviors and *inscribes* conclusions that dwell for a long time the child's imagination as a *moto* that operates with and beyond the other activities in which the child immediately engages. In this sense, the narrative continues to act in the child, even after the *period* of the *said writing* of the plot.

The stories told and the history taught have an immense heuristic value. Indeed, children hardly are satisfied when *listening that* story only once. If they are satisfied in touching the play only once, it is because the *inner realm* of their functions is far off somewhere else. On the other hand, if children ask to tell it *again and again*, it is because there is still much that has not been assimilated and digested, that is still new and that is making the child *to carry forward* in her development. In other words, the plot, the characters, the spoken and expressed still play with the child's determining motivations and still fulfill real needs in the movement of satisfaction. This shows the importance of choosing the stories to be told and aspects of history to be taught: they work as a sort of *experimental research* to know (locate) *where* the child's development is going and the measure of the incidence that the learning of the plot is exerting in the movement of her maturation.

The same narrative can be told to children of different ages. It is usually expected that, given the age difference, the behavior of each is quite different in face of the plot. However, if Vygotsky is right, age is not sufficient to determine the level of actual development of children. The involvement of a seven- or eight- year-old child in a narrative may well be similar to that of a five-year-old. The process of development of each one has an eminently singular cadence, depending fundamentally on the *learning history* of each one.

On the other hand, telling stories and teaching history to children of different ages can promote a *dual expansion* of the *proximal development zone* in younger children. The first comes from direct involvement with the plot, which causes an overcoming of what is already consolidated in the child; the second is because the participation of older children in the plot and in the interpretation of the plot indicates to the younger child that there is still more than she was able *to catch* by herself aided by the heuristic force of the narrative.

If spoken language mediates the whole process of human development; if the significant capacity of language has a history in each one that goes from the birth of the gesture to the ability to write, if written language becomes procedurally a direct symbolism, then it seems to us – in addition to contemplating this ascending dialectical process in which the development of language levels goes step by step with the development of psychological functions – the narrative function also allows a significant archeological return movement of language over its *history*. In fact, when someone listens a narrative *written* in a book; in the book where someone *reads* with the *index finger* the words written and pronounced in *speech*; a speech that counts and translates the expressiveness *drawn* in the attitudes and feelings of the characters; if the child who listens transposes into *drawings* and *scribbles* the *writing* that the said of the book speaks; if the child's fingers, passing over her drawings and scribbles, point out their meaning in terms of the child's life; then language moves on itself.

The narrative function involves even more, *that* whereby human development is properly realized through learning, that is, what Vygotsky calls the higher psychological functions that are operative and/or latent in the considerations made above. In fact, getting into the meaning of a plot implies differences in penetration levels. Vygotsky states at least the following functions: perception, attention, memory and thought. If we look, for instance, at a six-year-old child before and after participating in the plot, we can see that the four functions take place, but they take place on a different level. Certainly, it is not the *thought* that determines the appropriation of this child; but can it be said that in some way the thought *already* is not there? This means saying with Vygotsky that the functions that become prominent at a *later moment* of development are already there at the embryonic level, waiting to bear fruit. It also shows simply a non-linearity in the development of functions, but a dialecticity that advances by taking over the previous functions and modifying the relation between them.

These considerations about how the narrative function illustrates the realization of Vygotsky's teachings lead us to another opening, to a properly *philosophical*, specifically *anthropological* question or, yet, an *anthropological archeology* of which we have only indicated a few elements. In fact, people are not born with all the tools ready to use, in the sense of an absolute autonomy. The contents of an existing comes along with the existence. And Vygotsky grasps as fundamental of existence a trace of this archeology: existence is with others and possibly "before or in the face of others" (Lévinas, 1982, p. 72). The psychological development comes about as *one developing in the relationship with the other*. The author's concern with this aspect of human development is clear, so he sees it as essential for other aspects or for others to develop. From there, that is, if the contents come from existence in relation, wouldn't it be necessary to apprehend – and not *introduce* – right there and from the beginning an "ethical situation"? (Lévinas, 1998, p. 108-109).

Indeed, if an absolute autonomy from the outset in relation to the *other* would be truly ahistorical and unreal; if the referral to the *other* is the condition of human history itself, and always by the *medium* of language, also of culture; if the opening of history and its cultural forms is always referred to a community of existing humans; if to be alive and remain alive we always go through the tenuous thread between our incompleteness and our need of the *others*; then one might have to think that development brought about by learning requires the *care* of what makes it so in every human being. This is Ethics!

From there, an *anthropological archeology* indicates that at its core throbs an ethics that exposes that the great question of teaching and learning is a derived issue: the conditions of belonging to life and of permanence to life need to be considered in each existing coming from the *others* and among them. In fact, empirically, everyone who *presently* believes to *live by himself* needed, for a long time, that the *others* wanted him as belonging to life and his life so that he had, in another time, the

*actual* conditions of power – including – to exterminate some from life. This is the ethical throb!

*Anthropological archeology* reveals that the question of teaching and learning also poses from the beginning its condition of possibility *in each one*. In fact, could a development with learning, a learning pulling the development together occur, if everything from the beginning were already pre-determined by external and/or internal factors of each one? Teaching and learning actually are put into its ontogenesis and in his phylogenesis for a being that is itself radically *open*. Certainly, there are determinisms with *others* in the world in certain spheres of human experience. Vygotsky himself recognizes the presence of the natural root in the historical unfolding of human life. But the very history of each, and in general, is witness *in itself* of the specific *footprint* of the human, as an existing to whom it is possible to live the open distension of temporality. In this sense, here is again the derivation indicated above: teaching and learning, learning and teaching, before coming an actual pedagogical question, are an *anthropological necessity* in an existing given as radically open. This anthropological *data* is an irremovable assumption of all pedagogical work, including the work of Vygotsky.

Because of this openness, the possibility of paradox: we can develop our higher psychological functions through learnings that lead us in the direction of the *wound* of what was the condition of possibility of our advent and of psychological development itself. It is then that *anthropological archeology* once again moves as Ethics: it is necessary to put the problem of *which* contents and *which* learning allow the existing humans to continue their advent and the continuity of their belonging to life *with the others in the world*.

Thus, as far as we have access, only existing human beings can introduce open logics into life that is open to time. Only humans openly introduce in time logics that can destroy them. Only existing human beings can openly introduce contents and experiences that develop each one in multiple directions by *pro-vocation* of learning as possible anticipations of logics that make each one remains different and unique, but also referred archeologically to what is most common. Learning to become *human* is a task for everyone; to *pro-vocate the human* in each *other*, by the different types of open teachings that history has already known and by possible new ones, is a common task. Moreover, the choice of the narratives with the worlds that inhabit them is open; the one who chooses *what* to tell is – ethically – responsible for the possible ones that will provoke those who will listen.

## Conclusion

If Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* asserted that “being is said in many ways” (Aristóteles, 1969, p. 147), we can say about Vygotsky that *man is made in many ways*. But the Being is, in fact, anonymous and the saying the Being can be done without historicity even if it needs time – as in Heidegger. The adventures of saying the man, the men, come mainly

from his *way of being*. Human historicity, even if it follows some constant movement, is of the order of the movement of being, it is of the order of change, it is the order of inter-human communication and its blocking, it is a time lived as opening and resuming, it is an order archeology, and prospecting, it is a time of processes, dynamic processes of development and learning, development through learning that, even if mature, always remain openly unfinished. For this – and certainly for other adventures – the saying about human beings as existing and also about the no-more-existing, educating human beings, are permanent tasks.

Vygotsky's work is, in our appropriation/interpretation, a historical-cultural food for humanity and, at the same time, a *book of elements* for the preparation of the *human* that develops in each and every human existing in time. If many existing *deal with* the education of humans and, yet again and again *re-deal with* Vygotsky, it is because there is a *world* of decisive contributions in it, both in terms of understanding human processes and open processes as possible. Vygotsky's work fulfills a narrative function that *can open the world of those who read it* and bring *educational* metamorphoses in learning as the *new possible to be*.

And for this, the appropriation processes will continue. They will remain open: within the logic of the capital of appropriate things in which even human beings are transformed into merchandise. A type of learning, a type of human development. Or in the logic that weaves the *human* as a work of the learning of those who lead them, a learning that recognizes the indelible referral to others where, in many ways, their *own* educational path is inscribed. Learning *to know-to-live-with-others-in-the-world* could very well translate the *desirable possible* of human development in any learner, as *his actual* learning narrative.

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## Notes

- 1 Vygotsky (1991; 2000). We chose the two Spanish translations for the following reasons. The first work is a translation of the English version *Mind in society, the development of higher psychological processes*, considered by the critics as one of the best and most cited. In relation to the second work, this is one of the Spanish translations made directly from the Russian language and includes the parts suppressed by Stalinism.
- 2 Although other authors are present in an indirect way, we here only list the work of Newton Duarte (2007). The author critically addresses in this work the problem of partial translations of Vygotsky's works, as well as some inaccuracies in the apprehension of fundamental theses, while at the same time clarifying some misunderstandings.
- 3 See especially the work *Le Conflit des Interprétations: essais d'herméneutique* (Ricoeur, 1969).

- 4 See also, from the same author, the work *Para mudar a vida* (Heller, 1982).
- 5 See Ricoeur (1986).
- 6 In *Pensamiento y lenguaje* (Vygotsky, 1991), especially in Chapters V and VII, Vygotsky explains the course of the formation of concepts, a path that is rooted in the human capacity for language, in which signs and words move.
- 7 This is, in general, the meaning of *work* in Marx and Engels. On the same path, in *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 69), in Chapter V, succinctly, he states: “[...] work as a human activity directed to an end”.
- 8 See also the Chapter 2 of *Pensamiento y lenguaje* (Vygotsky, 1991): *la teoría de Piaget sobre lenguaje y pensamiento en el niño*.
- 9 On the concepts of *growth* and *maturation*, in *El desarrollo de los procesos psicológicos superiores* (Vygotsky, 2000), Vygotsky makes extensive use of these concepts by referring to the evolutionary cycles that are completed or are filled in the process of developing the inner course of a human being. In other words, such concepts refer to progress or advancement from one evolutionary stage to another.
- 10 See three works by Paul Ricoeur devoted to the hermeneutical study of the narrative: *Temps et Récit: I, II and III* (Ricoeur, 1983; 1984; 1985), published in Paris by Éditions du Seuil throughout the 1980s.

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