



Considerations on affectivity in teaching relations: Vygotsky's contributions

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this article is to present conclusions of a study about the affective matter from an inter-relational perspective with cognition, as a single unit – the human psychic life –, which means to conceive that affection is present in and constitutive of any and every human action. This research is theoretically based on studies conducted by L.S. Vygotsky. We also made use of contributions by some of his commentators or interpreters that addressed this theme specifically. The text is part of the theoretical foundations of the doctoral thesis on this subject, in empirical context – a youth and adult education class.

Keywords: affection, intellect, learning, knowledge.

Considerações sobre afetividade nas relações de ensino: as contribuições de Vigotski

RESUMO. Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar conclusões de um estudo sobre a questão afetiva em uma perspectiva inter-relacional com a cognição, como uma mesma unidade, que é a vida psíquica humana, o que significa conceber que o afeto está presente e é constitutivo de toda e qualquer ação humana. Tem como base teórica os estudos realizados por L. S. Vigotski. Lançamos mão, ainda, das contribuições de alguns de seus comentadores ou interpretadores que tratam especificamente dessa temática. O texto faz parte dos fundamentos teóricos da Tese de Doutorado sobre essa problemática, em contexto empírico, de sala de aula, numa classe de educação de jovens e adultos.

Palavras-chave: afeto, intelecto, aprendizagem, conhecimento.

Consideraciones sobre afectividad en las relaciones de enseñanza: las contribuciones de Vigotski

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar conclusiones de un estudio sobre la cuestión afectiva en una perspectiva inter-relacional con la cognición, como una misma unidad, que es la vida psíquica humana, lo que significa concebir que el afecto está presente y es constitutivo de toda y cualquier acción humana. Tiene como base teórica los estudios realizados por L. S. Vigotski. Echamos mano, aún, de las contribuciones de algunos de sus comentadores o interpretadores que tratan específicamente de este tema. El texto hace parte de los fundamentos teóricos de la Tesis de Doctorado sobre esta problemática, en contexto empírico, de clase, en un aula de educación de jóvenes y adultos.

Palabras clave: afecto, intelecto, aprendizaje, conocimiento.

Introduction

Writing neither this / nor that thing –
 In order to say them all – Or, at least, none.
 (BARROS, 1998, p. 61).

The first readings we carried out left us under the impression that the affective dimension was being little focused in studies turned to the field of pedagogical practices. Due to this initial observation, we conducted a bibliographical survey¹ about

researches that, directly or indirectly, address this theme.

The searches confirmed that there were few masters and doctoral works aimed at affectivity. The results were grouped, for exposition purposes, considering the scope they have as to

¹ As part of the bibliographical research for the theoretical foundation, a search for possible titles and abstracts of dissertations and theses on affectivity and emotions in the classroom was carried out on the websites of some graduate

programs in education of Brazilian universities, using categories such as Affection, Emotion, and Affectivity. The listed titles were requested directly to the sectors in charge of these. Programs and sent by mail. It is worth highlighting the small number of titles. The first chapter of the Thesis brings an analysis and synthesis of the perspective of these studies on the relation between affectivity, emotions and cognition in the classroom. The Thesis, based on Vygotsky and his Cultural-Historical Theory on Human Development, seeks to work with the conceptions of affectivity, emotions and cognition/knowledge in the classroom, in an inter-relational and non-dichotomous way, as these analyzed researches do.

the way of focusing on affectivity within school context.

In the first scope (MELLO, 1995), it is possible to see the dichotomy of the affective aspect in relation to the cognitive aspect, being even harmful to the pedagogical process. The second one (ANDRÉ, 1995; DIAS-DA-SILVA, 1992), especially in researches turned to studying the practices of the 'good teacher', even though without taking affection as the central question, comes to the conclusion that the 'good pedagogical practice' is that whose teachers resort to affective resources. In the third approach (ALMEIDA, 1997; PEREIRA, 1998; PINHEIRO, 1995; TASSONI, 2000), it was possible to notice that researchers were more concerned with investigating the perceptions of teachers about the role of the affective dimension in their practices or with focusing on emotions/affectivity as a way to better guarantee the conditions for the conduction of teaching and learning. The fourth scope (OLIVEIRA, 2001; SCHLINDWEIN, 1999) seeks to study emotions and affections in their indissoluble interaction with cognitive aspects.

The reading of these studies contributed to comprehending the ways that affectivity has been seen in the pedagogical context because, except for the fourth scope, the other ones, in our view, focus on affectivity as being much more centered on the teacher, considering the latter as the bearer of an affectivity that will enable a certain configuration of pedagogical relations. Or they postulate the need the teacher has to dominate affective/emotional questions as a means to develop/organize/control his or her pedagogical activities. These ways of conceiving the affectivity matter seemed to us, somehow, quite reductionist or simplifier for a so complex dimension of human life.

The work presented below is an effort to study affection from an inter-relational perspective with cognition, as constitutive of a single unit - the human psychic life -, which would mean to conceive that affection is present in and constitutive of any and every human action. Thus, the contribution of this work would be in discussing and presenting evidences of the indissoluble inter-relation between affectivity and cognition, considering that, as part of a single psychic unit, they penetrate and affect each other mutually in the teaching and learning process.

First Considerations on the Affective Dimension in the Classroom or the Reason for Our Incursion into this Theme

The theoretical readings² and the didactical-pedagogical experiences³ through which we have

gone led us to focus on the affective dimension as being constitutive of the production process of teaching and learning relations, centering the attention on questions like: what is, after all, this affective dimension? How is it configured in the pedagogical process?

These experiences have taught us that one cannot expect that students with trajectories of failure, of unsuccessfulness, seen and labeled as contumacious losers, will change on their own (as if change was an eminently individual fact)⁴ and acquire a new perspective to face education and learning as necessary and important for their lives. This change needs to start with the school. It is the latter's role to take the first steps to embrace – with hope (and hope is a beautiful emotion) – these students, mistreated and hardened, discredited and with their self-esteem in the limbo, that come and knock at its door.

The perspective of a pedagogical relation based on dialogue, on tolerance and on respect to a student's individuality, seemed to suggest – at that moment – that the affectivity matter was imperative to the success of the pedagogical practice. Thus, the sovereignty of the affective dimension was highlighted as the driver and trigger of stimuli that awake the students' interest and desire to learn.

But what did we understand by affective dimension back then? This was not very clear and no theoretical curiosity to answer this question had been awakened. At that moment, we gathered under this name pedagogical attitudes such as attention to students, their valuation, and commitment with them.

Affective relations then encompassed aspects as comprehension, patience, attention, respect, solidarity, appreciation for small achievements, encouragement to cognitive growth. All of the latter would be indispensable elements to the establishment of a cordial relationship between teacher and student in order to mobilize psychic energies, the willingness and the interest of students towards learning activities.

Thus, because we have observed that affectivity operates on the teaching process – provokes a certain configuration – and, we could say, temporarily causes changes in the classroom environment, stimulating or discouraging the learning process, we have decided to take it as a research theme, seeking

CES, and then with the coordination of said CES, performing the reformulation of the teaching carried out there. We have also developed two researches involving teachers and students, with the aim of identifying the perceptions of these subjects on the teaching provided. The master's dissertation was about Educação de Jovens e Adultos [Youth and Adult Education], EJA, and the field research was developed at this CES.

⁴ The change goes through a learning process and, herein, we are working with a learning perspective that is socio-historical, cultural, mediated by the subjects in interaction with the social context, in the concrete story of individuals. This perspective will be better explored in the next topic.

² Especially Paulo Freire and the whole Popular Education chain.

³ As a more meaningful experience in this area, we highlight the work with the pedagogical team of a Centro de Ensino Supletivo [Adult Education Center],

to problematize its relation with learning, with knowledge and with singularization processes of subjects.

If, at first, we were considering that affectivity is that which would create the stimuli necessary to learning, little by little we were taken by a theoretical curiosity of better comprehending this important dimension of the interactional process in the classroom: What actually is affectivity in teaching relations? How is it constituted and seen in the interactions produced in the classroom?

Starting the theoretical readings of L.S. Vygotsky - which will be referred to throughout this text - and based on empirical data we have observed that affective relations alone (or what we were understanding as such) would not explain the interest or lack of it of some students in studying, because the comprehension of affectivity we had constructed was centered only on aspects socially considered as positive in interpersonal relations - kindness, attention, respect -, ignoring that refusal, negligence, lack of interest are also ways to show how much one has been affected - and how so - by experienced social relations, and that the latter occur in certain production conditions.

Therefore, we begin to think as well that working conditions - concerning didactical material, the structure of the school in terms of equipment, environment, the fundamental question of the relations of students with curricular contents - are aspects that cannot be neglected, because they constitute determinant factors to trigger behaviors, whether relating to interest, attention, lack of attention, or refusal in the classroom and that manifest in different ways and senses: lost eyes, enraged expressions, laughs, jokes, teasing, sleepiness, yawning, leaving the classroom, touring around the corridors.

Senses are produced in the relationship with the other, in certain social conditions, mediated by language. It is not the individual, the student alone that should be held accountable for desirable/undesirable behaviors that he or she displays in the classroom. However, the problem is usually seen as being individual and detached from a whole historical and cultural context, that is, from the very conditions in which teaching happens.

The look over pedagogical practices cannot disregard - as we used to do - that the 'knowledge component and its forms of production and circulation in the classroom' are elements that also affect students in terms of their perspectives in relation to the school. When signifying an entire trajectory of reflections that we were carrying out about the affectivity matter, we realized - as we have

highlighted from the beginning of this text - that affectivity was not only a simplifier of the very concept of affection, but also did not explain what we were seeking to clarify.

In this sense, the matter of the relations between affection and learning remained and we proposed ourselves to investigate it, now mediated by evidences of a comprehension that the affective life encompasses several manifestations. It comprises emotions strongly linked to organic and expressive changes, and feelings, which, differently from emotions, do not necessarily cause visible bodily changes, referring to processes of production of senses mediated by language.

Affection, as an instance of production of senses, which can be provoked by immediate bodily situations or by abstract situations, can be expressed through emotions, words, gestures, looks, mumbling and silence. More than determining cognitive activity, affection is its important mediator, affecting the interactive dynamics produced in the classroom and the teaching relations established there. Likewise, cognition development - understood as a process of appropriation and elaboration of culture - also mediates the transformations of affective states, their apprehension and comprehension by the very subject that experiences them.

Affection, then, in our view, presents itself now not as a dimension above the other dimensions of human behavior, but as being constitutive and constituent of the teacher- knowledge-student articulation. It is important to underscore that, in this perspective; affectivity cannot be comprehended as being detached from the relations with learning contents, in their social and concrete production conditions.

Now, already possessing an expanded and less simplifying comprehension of the affectivity matter and its manifestations through relations in the classroom, we developed a theoretical study supported on L. S. Vygotsky's observations on the subject, which will be presented below.

Affection in the Web of Senses

If, on one hand, there is consensus among those who study Vygotsky that he did not approach more profoundly the affective dimension, on the other hand, the reading of his works has been providing us with interest clues, drawn by him, about this human dimension when he refers to the complex and dynamic unit that exists between intellect and affection and its transformations in the course of the different genetic plans. These clues appear in some

notes about his methodological proposal for the study of the thought/language relation, and in his criticisms of emotion theories that emerged in his time, as well as in studies he conducted about mental, visual disability, etc. Also, his studies about the psychology of arts treated of emotions related to creativity, imagination, and fantasy.

In his cultural-historical theory as a whole, Vygotsky defends the thesis that we are constituted in inter-subjective relations mediated by culture and by language. Our humanization happens in the arena of history and of culture: “[...]; the psychological development of humans is part of the general historical development of our species and must be so understood” (VYGOTSKY, 2000a, p. 80).

We are made in history and in culture and, thus, the explanation for the constitution of subjects – of the psychic life – cannot be searched in individuals taken in an isolated manner, but in the social relations they experience, of which language (verbal and nonverbal signs) is constitutive. The individual, thus, is not constituted in a biological unit only but also in a historical unit, because he or she bears in his or her characters the characteristics of cultural-historical development (VYGOTSKY, 1997).

The appropriation of symbolic goods – signs, instruments – causes radical changes in all aspects of human life. It is this interaction with culture, mediated by language, which creates and develops typically human functions. In this way, the insertion of the subject in social and cultural relations, from his or her birth, is the beginning of his or her constitution as a human subject and of the transformation of the biological sphere into a cultural and historical sphere. Thus, the human life is radically subordinated to the movement of history and of culture, which changes, transforms and develops other aspects in the biological realm, in such a way that humans, in their dialectical movement, undertake their walk towards a detachment, increasingly complex, from instincts and from the biological field to the culture field. Thus, the composition of the psychic life, its genesis, function (way of acting) are eminently social and historical (VYGOTSKY, 2000c).

In this sense, different psychological functions (cognitive, emotional, affective), as components of subjectivity, develop not only as an impulse regulated by the conspicuity of individual (organic) elements, but as processes mediated by culture and by history. Affective processes, for instance, in addition to having ties with emotion, understood as impulsion of neurophysiological aspects, are semiotically mediated. That is, they are named,

signify and have their expression regulated (released or repressed) and modulated in social relations.

Thus, the psychic life has a cultural-historical specificity, which means to say that affection and emotions, just as thought/cognition, are all interconnected and subjected to the forces and to the dialectical movement of the historical development of humankind, that is, they change, develop, are transformed through mediation in the context of their interactions with the social and cultural realm. To Vygotsky, the social realm not only activates and regulates a subject’s psychological functions, but also gives rise to totally new forms of behavior, which emerged in the historical period of the development of humankind. The social and cultural life is, thus, the source of the development of a subject’s psychic life (VYGOTSKY, 1997).

In this way, the forms of perceiving our emotions, of reacting to them and of expressing them, as well as the designation, the recognition and the manifestation of our feelings and our control over them are historical and mediated by semiotic elements of culture. The ways that we live our affective bonds and our emotions are also configured as cultural practices proper of a certain society, of certain moments of its history. To say that emotions are historical means to say that they do not have a fixed and immutable nature and that they do not belong to an innate nature of individuals, but that, as part of the psychic life, equally to this one, they are subordinated to the process of historical and cultural development and, therefore, change, are transformed along the phylogenesis, the ontogenesis and the sociogenesis.

Following the same line of reasoning, Oliveira (2001) observes that, to Vygotsky, relations between different processes change with development, including between intellect and affection. “From an essentially organic and instinctive reaction, emotion would take on a highly-complex form of operation, subject to changes in the psychic life” (OLIVEIRA, 2001, p. 13-14).

Vygotsky makes it clear when stating that

[...]; the historical development of affections or of emotions consists fundamentally of changes in initial connections in which a new order and new connections have been produced and emerge (VYGOTSKY, 2004, p. 127).

The fact of thinking about things that is outside of us changes nothing in them, but the fact of thinking about affections, situating them in other relations with our intellect and other instances, greatly changes our psychic life. In simpler terms, he says:

[...]; our affections act in a complicated system with our concepts, and one who does not know that the jealousy of a person related to Mohammedan concepts of fidelity regarding women is different from one coming from other people related to a system of opposing concepts about the same thing, does not understand that this feeling is historic, that it actually changes in different psychological and ideological means although in it remains undoubtedly a certain biological radical under which this emotion arises (VYGOTSKY, 2004, p. 127).

In this way, according to the author:

[...]; complex emotions appear only historically and are a combination of relationships that arise as a result of historical life, that combination occurs in the course of the evolutionary process of emotions (VYGOTSKY, 2004, p. 127).

Thus it is possible to understand that, to Vygotsky, emotions and affections have their genesis in the course of historical development, taking on complex qualities and specificities that distinguish them from instinctive emotions related to the man's biological inheritance. These observations break with dualist views that separated, in a dichotomous way, emotions into instinctive and superior, because as Vygotsky emphasizes,

There is no feeling that, due to a birth privilege, belongs to the upper class and at the same time others that, by their own nature, can be regarded as belonging to the lower class. The only difference is a difference in richness and complexity, and all our emotions are capable of ascending every step of our sentimental evolution (VAN DER VEER; VALSINER, 2001, p. 385).

This Vygotskian postulate, consequently, refutes

[...]; whatever hypotheses that relate a subject's emotional traits to innate factors [...], since they are in a process of permanent configuration, mediated by social meanings and social situations (OLIVEIRA; REGO, 2003, p. 23).

Richness and complexity, change, differentiation and singularity are therefore attributes of the affective and emotional life whose genetic origin depends on cultural-historical development and on social relations. Vygotsky (1999) used to criticize theories by Darwin, Spencer, Ribot and respective followers, due to the fact that said theories, far from seeking to clarify how emotions grow rich in childhood, they sought, on the contrary, to show how they are repressed, weakened and eliminated.

Considering the observations above presented, it seems reasonable and pertinent to suppose that affections are liable of being apprehended by the subject himself or herself and by his or her

interlocutors through language. It is through language that we appropriate concepts with which we name our experiences that we recognize and compare the latter, that we evaluate them and, also, that we name affective signs that we read in others. And, in this sense, affective experiences are communicable to the other and comprehensible to us.

Therefore, the word, as Vygotsky highlights in his studies, has a vital role in the perception, organization, restructuration and control of our psychic activity, in which our emotional and affective states are included. We need signs to perceive the world so that we situate ourselves in it, observe it and appreciate it, for us to comprehend ourselves and our 'states of mind' in it. The sign allows us to overcome the immediacy of the relations with the environment and with others, and can control our attention, reorganize our perception, re-dimension the meanings and senses with which we elaborate ourselves throughout our personal story, which is always and necessarily social.

The word, thus, plays a central role, according to Vygotsky, not only in the development of thinking, but also in the historical evolution of consciousness as a whole. According to him, "[...] a word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (VYGOTSKY, 2000a, p. 190). "Consciousness arises from a social experience", being "[...] the language the basis and bearer of this social experience". Vygotsky (1997, p. 88) says: "[...] without language there is no consciousness or self-consciousness".

Vygotsky, in particular, when trying to show that the subject incorporates cultural signs and instruments through language, showed that "[...] a child's affective and cognitive processes are ultimately determined by his or her cultural and social environment" (VAN DER VEER; VALSINER, 2001, p. 386). Based on this consideration, it is possible to assume that, if the psychic life is, to Vygotsky, socially and culturally constituted, then affections and emotions, as indissoluble parts of this unit, are also necessarily socially, historically and culturally constituted.

In turn, Oliveira (1992) highlights the relation that occurs between affectivity and cognition in the constitution of the subject, because the formation process of consciousness is, at the same time, a formation process of subjectivity within the context of inter-subjectivity situations, in such a way that

[...]; the passage of the inter-psychological level thus involves dense interpersonal relations symbolically mediated rather than mechanic exchanges limited to a merely intellectual level (OLIVEIRA, 1992, p. 80).

Thus, differently from the animals, to which emotion is of a strictly organic order, our emotional states and their expression are modulated in their functioning by signs, which we appropriate in experienced social relations. Being internalized, that is, internally reconstructed, these signs constitute us and configure our singularity – our consciousness, in terms of cognition, affection and valuation. As individuals, we do not approach objects of knowledge only as cognition beings but as beings in our entirety, made of affections, rationality, emotion, values, and imagination. By comprehending, dominating and creating senses and meanings, we develop “[...]; specifically human functions: will, memory, voluntary attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, formation of concepts, affection, imagination” (PADILHA, 2002, p. 138).

Vygotsky (2000a) harshly criticizes the traditional psychology that sees human consciousness as a splittable object: cognitive functions on one side, and affective functions on the other side. According to him, the separation of the intellectual side of our consciousness from its affective-volitional side turns thinking into an autonomous flow of thoughts that think by themselves, separated from all fullness of real life, from the reasons to live, from interest and from the attractions of the intelligent human being.

It is the individual in his or her entirety the one who, mediated by language, elaborates meanings and senses, attributes to them validity or not, knows and learns. His or her needs, motivations, interests and desires are constitutive of these meanings and senses, since behind each thought, Vygotsky (2000a) states, there is an affective-volitional tendency, and a full comprehension of somebody else’s thought it is only possible when we understand this affective-volitional basis. The separation of the thought from other manifestations of a subject’s mental activity results in a meaningless reflection incapable of changing anything in the life or in the attitude of a person, as some kind of primeval force having an influence on the personal life, in a mysterious and inexplicable way (VIGOTSKY, 2000a).

To Vygotsky, the affective and intellectual inter-relation is made evident in the sign, in the word, as the latter contains a transmuted affective attitude concerning the fragment of reality to which it refers. In this sense, it allows us to follow the way that starts at the need and drives of a person until the specific direction taken by his or her thoughts; or the opposite way, from his or her thoughts to his or her behavior and activity (VIGOTSKY, 2000a). It is, thus,

[...]; in the very meaning of the word, therefore, so central to Vygotsky, that one can find the realization

of his integrating perspective of the cognitive and affective aspects of the human psychology functioning (OLIVEIRA, 1992, p. 82).

The word, in the living chain of enunciations, does not acquire or transmit senses or meanings solely referring to the intellectual sphere, but acquires and communicates valuing, ideological and affective appreciations related to the ways that subjects, in the intra-psychological realm, live and share those senses and meanings. The world comes to us not only as colors and shapes, but as a world of senses and meanings, says Vygotsky (2000b), which necessarily go through the appreciation of all that composes our psychic life. The sense, then, for being related to the subjective sphere (intellectual, affective, related to an individual’s experience and story), proves much richer, more mobile and flexible and much broader than the very signification contained in the word.

The ‘sense’ of a word, according to Vygotsky (2000a), predominates over its ‘meaning’. It is the sum of all psychological events that it awakes in the subject’s consciousness. The sense, thus, can be understood as a complex, fluid and dynamic whole with several unequal zones of stability. The meaning, in its turn, constitutes only one of the zones of the sense and has a more stable and precise character because it remains along all changes in the sense. Vygotsky says: “[...]; the meaning of a word in the dictionary is nothing more than a stone in the building of sense, nothing but a potentiality that is realized in several ways in speech” (VIGOTSKY, 2000a, p. 181).

It is in the inter-discursive relation that the word acquires senses, that is, that its sign potentiality gains vitality in its several and unlimited developments of senses. “A word acquires a sense within the context from which it emerges; in different contexts, it changes its sense” (VIGOTSKY, 2000a, p. 181). According to Oliveira (1992), the sense of the word links its objective meaning to the context of use of the language, as well as to the subject’s personal and affective motives. In this way, the sense of a word stand as a complete, mobile and flexible phenomenon that changes depending on discursive situations and contexts, being nearly unlimited (VIGOTSKY, 2000a).

However, according to Vygotsky, it is in the internal discourse that the sense phenomenon reaches its maximum point, because in the latter there is a pronounced “[...]; predominance of the sense over the meaning [...]”, since “[...]; a single word would be so saturated with sense that many words would be required to explain it in external speech” (VIGOTSKY, 2000a, p. 182-3). Thus,

[...]; in the intra-psychological realm the individual deals with the meaning dimension that relates words to affective and contextual experiences much more than to their objective and shared aspect (OLIVEIRA, 1992, p. 82).

The meaning of a word represents an amalgam of thought and of language so narrow that it is hard to say whether it is a speech phenomenon or a thought phenomenon. The relation between thought and word is a living process; the thought is born through the word (VIGOTSKY, 2000a).

The word, uttered by subjects in inter-discursive relations, despite its stable meanings consolidated in language, brings marks of the affective experiences, of the historicity and singularity of these subjects, synthesizing, within it, that which is affective and that which is cognitive. The meaning is changed by the experiential and affective context of subjects in their social relations. In this way, we do not utter only words/thoughts with no connection with the other spheres of the psychic life, but we utter word/thoughts whose significations and senses are realized with the marks of our subjective experiences, of our feelings. This is because – to use Vygotsky's words again – the thought itself is generated by our motivations, our desires, needs, interests and emotions. “Every sentence that we say in real life has some kind of subtext, a thought hidden behind it [...]” (VIGOTSKY, 2000a, p.185), that is, behind every thought there is always an affective-volitional tendency.

Signification is therefore enriched by the sense, within the context of the inter-discursive relation, in which words “[...] acquire a much broader intellectual and affective sense” (VIGOTSKY, 2000a, 181). Consequently, these are the senses and meanings that affect subjects in their subjectivity, leading them to the enunciation of behaviors and attitudes in consonance with the situation they are facing. Devoid of its affective component, the thought – as Vygotsky emphasized – turns into some kind of meaningless thought, therefore, devoid of the mobilizing power of individuals, which leads us to assume that the thought about which Vygotsky speaks is that rooted in the story and in the life of individuals and can be understood only in this field.

In this way, it seems opportune to consider that it is in the field of senses and meanings that one should seek the genesis of the changes in the life and in the conduct of individuals. The senses and meanings, thus, are the genesis of the mobilization of individuals towards their actions, reactions and attitudes in the context of the social relations, and, in their specificity, pedagogical relations are social relations. Outside this field (of senses and

meanings), one would be left with just searching for the explanations to the changes in the life of a person, in some kind of primeval force influencing the personal life, in a mysterious and inexplicable way, as Vygotsky states.

In this sense, Pino considers that affective phenomena, as part of psychic phenomena, refer to “[...] subjective experiences that translate the way that every subject ‘is affected’ by his or her life events or, better, by the ‘sense’ that such events make to him or her” (PINO, [2001?], p. 128, emphasis added). Then, for instance, in pedagogical relations it would be plausible to consider that students are affected in different ways by experiences lived there, which involve teachers, mobilized knowledge, material conditions, etc.

When treating of children with visual disability, for instance, Vygotsky brings his comprehension of affections and emotions as a driving force that impels the subject to overcome his or her difficulties and needs. “The need to win, to overcome obstacles intensifies strength and energy” (VYGOTSKY, 1997, p. 108). He argues that a being that found himself or herself completely adapted, who did not find any obstacle to his or her vital functions would be necessarily incapable of developing, of boosting his or her own functions and make development progress. Thus, it is in inadaptation that the subject finds the source of enormous possibilities of developing (VYGOTSKY, 1997).

Oliveira (2001, p. 7-9), studying emotions in Vygotsky's works, comes to the conclusion that, to him, “[...] affection seems especially related to motivational aspects, to the force that drives development”. Likewise, Rey (2000), when discussing the place of emotions in the social constitution of psychism, reinforces once again the idea of affective universe and driving force as inter-related elements, present in Vygotskian studies.

Vygotsky considers that in the realization or in the emergence of some new aspect of development, affections have a huge importance as they operate as a stimulus and strength for the subject to overcome difficulties and move forward. In this way, if these difficulties do not discourage the subject, do not force him or her to escape from them, but rather drive, activate him or her, then they lead him or her to indirect paths to his or her development (VYGOTSKY, 1997). He says, when referring to the subject with visual disability, for instance, that

[...]; the emotions, the feelings, the fantasy, the thought and other processes of a blind man's psyche are all subordinated to the common tendency to compensate the disability (VYGOTSKY, 1997, p. 106).

It should be highlighted that, if affection appears in some of his works as a driving force, in others Vygotsky “[...]; suggests that it is not necessarily configured in one only way and in only one direction” (OLIVEIRA, 2001, p. 8). The careful reading of his writings brings evidence of his comprehension of the ambivalence of affective phenomena, as the referred author observes:

The affection that impels and that moves the intellect forward in the sense of the appropriation of increasingly complex forms of mental functioning may also make it difficult and/or change its courses (OLIVEIRA, 2001, p. 8).

Vygotsky, in his studies about affections, feelings and emotions, does not establish differences between these terms, in such a way that they appear as synonyms in some of his works, as already evidenced by some of his interpreters (OLIVEIRA, 1992, 2001). However, he was aware of the complexity of this field of knowledge when he says that “[...]; it is harder to describe, to classify and to link this field of human behavior to certain laws than to do this with all the other ones” (OLIVEIRA; REGO, 2003, p. 114).

Blanck⁵ (VYGOTSKY, 2003) says that the concepts of emotions, passions, affections and feelings – which constituted a vast and rich field of human affectivity – were drastically reduced in the psychology of the 20th century to only one term: ‘emotion’. However, he considers that

[...]; the different concepts of affectivity mentioned comprehend several fields ontologically different from the reality of the psyche. Emotion would be closer to the biological sphere, whereas feeling would be a socialized emotion, a cultural product (In VIGOTSKI, 2003, p. 123).

Thus, instead of considering that those who study emotions and affections do not agree on these terminologies, it would be more coherent to assume that this terminological and semantic diversity reflects the complexity and the richness of the affective life, as Vygotsky emphasizes, which would not be reduced to dichotomous interpretations that isolate the biological and the psychological from the dynamics of the social and historical life. This is his most radical criticism. The psychological, as an individualist conception, just as the biological in its physiological and immutable aspect, are not enough for the comprehension of the psychic life.

Pino, in turn, considers that the term affectivity designates much more a quality of certain behaviors

than a psychic function, as thought or language. To him, “[...]; affective phenomena represent the way that events impact the sensitive nature of human beings, producing in them a roll of shaded reactions that define their way of being in the world”. He also suggests that it would be more appropriate to comprehend the “[...]; affective as a quality of human relations and of the experiences that they evoke”, because “[...]; social relations indeed mark the human life, endowing the set of the reality that forms their context (things, places, situations, etc.) with an affective sense” (PINO, [2001?], p. 130-131).

Oliveira (2001, p. 47) highlights that,

[...]; although emotion cannot be categorized as a psychological function, its manifestation depends on these functions, because a given emotion does not take shape without the activity of perception, of attention or of memory.

Final considerations

The considerations made throughout this text come to corroborate the hypothesis by Pino that, although Vygotsky does not work more specifically with the affectivity theme (given his short career), this does not mean that this question is absent “[...]; in the humanism that characterizes this perspective” (PINO, [2001?], p. 130).

Thus, affectivity – which would comprehend the set of affective phenomena (designated as affections, emotions, feelings, etc.) – could be considered always in its relational aspect, produced in inter-subjective relations, mediated by the symbolic and by the cultural-historical. In this way, the term affectivity would refer to a dimension of the psychic life that, in its unit, is inextricably constituted by affections, emotions, feelings, intellect and cognition.

The results point to the need to consider that affection is present in every and any human action, in all subjects in interaction, teachers and students, as well as in knowledge itself (affectivity of knowledge), as a human production. The affection and cognition dichotomy is denied, stressing the inadequacy of taking these two dimensions of psychic life in an isolated manner; attention is drawn to the fact that these dimensions inter-relate and affect each other mutually, and can be comprehended only inside this indissociation process.

Affection is always relational as it implicates the sense and meaning relation and, therefore, is constitutive of the psychic life of every individual. Consequently, the affective in teaching relations is

⁵ Organizer and commentator of Vygotsky's work, *Educational Psychology* (2003).

not characterized by only one function (positive affection), but in its ambivalence or multivalence, for being dependent of the appreciation that the subject does of the relation with the socio-cultural and historical context, of the conditions of teaching production, of available knowledge, of senses and meanings in circulation. Emotions and affections, thus, would manifest in the interactive circumstantial dynamics of the senses and meanings that subjects attribute to their relations with others and with cultural objects, mediated by language.

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Received on May 31, 2014.

Accepted on March 20, 2015.

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