

THE INTRINSIC RELATION BETWEEN HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE MARXIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. Considering the ideological assumptions that intend to mask the marxist epistemological foundations of historical-cultural psychology, this article aims to contribute to evidence the way in which historical and dialectical materialism has built the essential presuppositions of this psychological theory. In order to do so, the proposition was established that the three methodological pillars that underpin marxian criticism of bourgeois society – namely, the minimum unit of analysis, the categorical historicization and the contradictory essence of the studied phenomenon – support, in the same way, the historical analysis of the human psyche as a cross-functional system. In this way, it was tried to demonstrate that the marxian epistemological architectonic served as support for the construction of a legitimately marxist psychology that surpassed the atomistic limits of the formal bourgeois logic. It was concluded that the methodological specificity of historical-cultural psychology seized the development of psychological processes in the movement of their essential antagonistic tendencies – represented by the contradictory nucleus that contrasts and articulates the elementary and higher functional processes – reaching an understanding of historical concreteness which conforms to human subjectivity.

Keywords: Vygotsky, Lev Semenovich; marxism; dialectical materialism.

A RELAÇÃO INTRÍNSECA ENTRE A PSICOLOGIA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL E A EPISTEMOLOGIA MARXIANA

RESUMO. Considerando as investidas ideológicas que tencionam mascarar as bases epistemológicas marxistas da psicologia histórico-cultural, o artigo em tela visa contribuir para evidenciar o modo como o materialismo histórico e dialético edificou os pressupostos essenciais desta teoria psicológica. Para tanto, estabeleceu-se a proposição de que os três pilares metodológicos que fundamentam a crítica marxiana à sociedade burguesa – quais sejam, a unidade mínima de análise, a historicização categorial e a essência contraditória do fenômeno estudado – amparam, analogamente, a análise histórica do psiquismo humano como sistema interfuncional. Deste modo, objetivou-se demonstrar que a arquitetônica epistemológica marxiana serviu de sustentáculo para a edificação de uma psicologia legitimamente marxista a qual superou os limites atomísticos da lógica formal burguesa. Concluiu-se que a especificidade metodológica da psicologia histórico-cultural apreendeu o desenvolvimento dos processos psicológicos no movimento de suas tendências antagônicas essenciais – representadas pelo núcleo contraditório que contrapõe e articula os processos funcionais elementares e superiores – alcançando a compreensão da concretude histórica que conforma a subjetividade humana.

Palavras-chave: Vygotsky, Lev Semenovich; marxismo; materialismo dialético.

LA RELACIÓN INTRÍNSECA ENTRE LA PSICOLOGÍA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL Y LA EPISTEMOLOGÍA MARXIANA

RESUMEN. En cuanto a las investiduras ideológicas que pretenden enmascarar las bases epistemológicas marxistas de la psicología histórico-cultural, en el artículo en pantalla se pretende contribuir a evidenciar el modo en que el materialismo histórico y dialéctico ha edificado los supuestos esenciales de esta teoría psicológica. Para ello, se estableció la proposición de que los tres pilares metodológicos que fundamentan la crítica marxiana a la sociedad

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burguesa – que sean, la unidad mínima de análisis, la historicidad categorial y la esencia contradictoria del fenómeno estudiado – amparan, análogamente, el análisis histórico del psiquismo humano como sistema inter-funcional. De este modo, se pretendió demostrar que la arquitectónica epistemológica marxiana sirvió de sostenimiento para la edificación de una psicología legítimamente marxista la cual superó los límites atomísticos de la lógica formal burguesa. Se concluyó que la especificidad metodológica de la psicología histórico-cultural aprehendió el desarrollo de los procesos psicológicos en el movimiento de sus tendencias antagónicas esenciales – representadas por el núcleo contradictorio que contrapone y articula los procesos funcionales elementales y superiores – alcanzando la comprensión de la concreción histórica que conforma la subjetividad humana.

Palabras-clave: Vygotsky, Lev Semenovitch; marxismo; materialismo dialéctico.

Introduction

The ideological efforts to dissociate historical-cultural psychology from its Marxist methodological assumptions are recurrent, so as to remove it from its epistemological roots and mask the revolutionary character of its premises on human development (Duarte, 2011). With this in view, significant studies have pointed to the essential articulation between this theory and the historical and dialectical materialism in interface with education (Duarte, 2011, 2015b; Saviani, 2015, Tuleski & Franco, 2013), as well as the repercussions of this connection for the organization of education (Duarte, 2015a; Martins, 2013; Pasqualini & Abrantes, 2013).

This article aims to contribute to this revealing movement of the Marxian bases that support the psychological theory on the scene. In order to do so, we will delve into the categorial architecture erected by Marx (1867/2017a, 1894/2017b, 1885/2014, 1941/2011) in the study of capitalist society, demonstrating how it underlies the conception of psychic development postulated by historical-cultural psychology. The thrust of this presentation will be premised on the hypothesis that the three fundamental methodological pillars that outline the Marxian research of bourgeois society in the light of value theory are also present in the assumptions that epistemologically support the Vygotskian analytical trajectory and, therefore, the cultural and inter-functional understanding of human psychology. The three methodological pillars that outline the Marxian research are: the concept of a minimal unit of analysis; the historical apprehension of the categories of study; and the definition of the essential antagonisms that guide the historical concreteness of the phenomena.

In view of the purpose of the study presented here, we shall synthesize the confluence of these essential assumptions which underpinned the construction of the Marxian method. Subsequently, we will demonstrate the intrinsic articulation of these same premises with the theoretical-methodological bases of historical-cultural psychology.

The methodological foundations of the Marxian critique of bourgeois society

Marx's theory is based on the observation that classical economic analysis, limited to the empirical face of phenomena, hindered the understanding of the historical specificity of bourgeois forms of production (Marx, 1867/2017a, 1894/2017b, 1885/2014, 1941/2011). Thus, the fragmented and unilateral manifestations of economic relations were apprehended as natural and immutable premises, and therefore - in the ambiguity of being directly and mechanically limited to the phenomena that occur on the surface of economic life - the mediating categories that would lead to apprehension of the internal correlations of the capitalist mode of production were suppressed.

Accordingly, Marx (1885/2014) asserts that the Classical Political Economy overturned in one stroke "the basis for understanding the real movement of capitalist production" (309). That is, the studies of these economic chains do not access the general laws that guide the true purposes of the circulation of capital, and remain submissive to the dictates of these foundations precisely because they are ignored. As a result, the class restrictions of bourgeois science result in merely descriptive, punctual, fractional, imprecise conclusions which contribute to the concealment of the contradictory movement that simultaneously delineates the determinants of the maintenance and overcoming of the capitalist mode of production.

Having these limitations in mind, Marx (1867/2017a, 1894/2017b, 1885/2014) constructed his analysis of bourgeois society by reorganizing and transforming the meaning of its traditional categories, unraveling and exposing the fundamental contradictions that intertwine them. For this, he used a critical method that revolutionized the scientific treatment of reality, breaking up with the identity conception of the categories appearance and essence. In this sense, the Marxian method begins the process of delegitimizing bourgeois economic analysis by demonstrating the fragility of its starting point, that is, the concrete in its immediate presentation. According to Marx (1941/2011), this scenario gives us access only to a chaotic representation of reality which purposely conceals its essential determinations. Therefore, the author chooses the movement of apprehension of the phenomena of the abstract to the concrete like padding of the scientific method suitable for the understanding of the reality in its multiple determinations.

Therefore, the methodological foundations of historical and dialectical materialism advocate that the analysis of the general laws governing the functioning of reality cannot be achieved on the surface of the immediate manifestation of phenomena on screen. The real in its concreteness is multidetermined, so that its essential apprehension is conditioned to the progressive reconstruction of the contradictory internal movement which builds the categorial links that compose it and deny it simultaneously (Marx, 1941/2011). The theoretical unveiling, the discoveries of the internal tensions that coexist in the phenomena thus become a condition for human practice to work in favor of vector data and, consequently, against the others. It is, therefore, a condition required for the activity of individuals as beings who are subjects of history, and not subjected to it.

Capital in general and commodity as the elemental unit of analysis

Based on the assumptions outlined above, in order to justify the starting point adopted in his exposition, Marx (1867/2017a) states in the preface to the first edition of *Capital* that, in the economic sciences, it is not possible to use "microscopes nor of chemical reagents. The force of abstraction [*Abstraktionskraft*] must be replaced by both" (p.78). Therefore, the author announces abstraction as an essential tool for the unveiling of bourgeois economic reality, which should have as an object of initial study the simpler categories in their clearest expression, "under conditions that ensure the pure course of the process" (Marx, 1867/2017a, 78).

This search for the pure manifestation of the general laws that outline the functioning of the capitalist mode of production has resulted in a momentary dismemberment of the investigated object; that is, in order to identify the contradictory core of capital, Marx's expository trajectory (1941/2011, 1867/2017a) started from the isolation of the most elementary abstract determinations that underlie the current social order - in what the author called capital in general - and enriched them progressively toward the concrete thought. In this movement, the conceptualizations of capital were transformed as the process of categorial deduction revealed the continually more complex means of presentation and realization of the laws governing bourgeois society.

Hence, based on the methodological premises presented, the analysis of capital in general begins with the announcement of commodity as the germ cell of bourgeois society, justified by the fact that "the wealth of societies where the capitalist mode of production reigns appears [*erscheint*] as an enormous collection of commodities, and the individual commodity, in turn, appears as its elementary form" (Marx, 1867/2017a, p. 113). In this announcement, two essential foundations of the Marxian method are set out: the delimitation of the historically dated character of the investigation on screen, which does not refer to a universal concept of wealth, but to a wealth produced from specific social relations of production subjugated to capital laws; and the concept of a minimum unit of analysis - represented by the commodity category - in which all tendencies underlying the functioning of bourgeois society must be contained, and which represents the synthesis of the logical-historical contradictions that will outline the other determinations of the Marxian categorial architecture.

We will discuss the repercussions of these two essential foundations for the Marxian analysis of bourgeois society, as well as for the historical-dialectical materialist conception of the investigative method.

The historical delimitation of bourgeois economic categories

Demanding the methodological leap that outlined his analysis of capitalist society, Marx (1941/2011) asserts the need to apprehend the economic categories that build the bourgeois social order in their historical transit, that is, submitted to the specificity of the social relations of production in which they are inserted. In the author's words:

In all forms of society, it is a particular production and its corresponding relations that establish the position and influence of the other productions and their respective relations. It is a universal illumination in which all other colors are immersed and which modifies them in their particularity (Marx, 1941/2011, 59).

This observation surpassed the perspective of Classical Economics, which attributed eternal and invariable characteristics to the categories of analysis of bourgeois society, on the grounds that their existence preceded the capitalist social order. In this sense, Marx (1941/2011) will clarify that the existence of these categories in the previous social organizations occurred in an embryonic way, in a still undeveloped concrete state. Using the categories of money and labor as examples, the author demonstrates that both have found only the means to fully develop in the bourgeois configuration of production, since its operation is subject to the laws of value. In this sphere, these categories raise new definitions: money transcends its condition of simple general equivalent and begins to represent a necessary moment of the universal expression of capital in the continuous movement of accumulation of value; labor, in turn, gains centrality in the bourgeois social order and its abstract expression stands out to the detriment of its various objective forms of expression, since its private appropriation by the owners of the means of production is the fundamental element for the generation of more value and for the maintenance of the capitalist logic of accumulation (Marx, 1941/2011).

In this context, Marx (1941/2011) states that "the anatomy of the human being is a key to the anatomy of the monkey" (p.58) - an analogy that asserts that bourgeois economic categories help in understanding the social organizations that precede it, because in the conformation of capital, they reach more complex and complete levels of expression. This assertion, therefore, marks the overcoming of the teleological perspective adopted by the classical economists, which apprehends the previous social relations of production as stages previously destined to redound in the bourgeois conformation of social order, containing the germs of their subsequent expressions aprioristically. For historical and dialectical materialism, the historical understanding of social phenomena must prevail, so that "in all forms of society, it is a particular production and its corresponding relations that establish the position and influence of other productions and their respective relations" (Marx, 1941/2011, p. 59).

Therefore, although economic categories that overarched the previous social organizations are contained in the bourgeois social order, this should not be configured in an eternal and invariable apprehension of these analytical elements. From the imperative represented by the bourgeois mode of production, these categories reach new levels of achievement, which are subject to the particular functioning of capital. This particular functioning, in turn, is governed by the laws of the value theory; so, it is this theory that will guide the analytical architecture of bourgeois society in the perspective of historical and dialectical materialism.

The on-screen observation is of great importance in order to understand the starting point chosen by Marx (1941/2011, 1867/2017a) in his critical exposition of bourgeois society. From it, the author concludes that the economic categories of capital could not be developed by reference to their historical determination, but should be based on "the relation that exists between them in modern bourgeois society, which is exactly the opposite of what appears as their natural order or the order that corresponds to historical development" (Marx, 1941/2011, p. 60)

That is, Marx (1867/2017a) delimits the beginning of his investigative trajectory in the sphere of the simple circulation of commodities - which is the founding reference of the assertions of Classical Political Economy - precisely to demonstrate that the subjection of the prerogatives of that sphere to the law of values reverses and corrupts their assumptions. From this, it is revealed that the realization of exchange relations in bourgeois society relies on a given historically determined internal categorial

movement, which obeys the camouflaged purposes in the external definitions of the commodity circulation. We shall now see how this revelation is methodologically grounded.

The overcoming of the simple mercantile sphere

As we have pointed out earlier, Marx (1867/2017a) chose commodity as the minimum unit of analysis of capitalist society. This designation is based on the fact that it is in the most elementary category which synthesizes in itself the logical-historical contradictions inherent in the bourgeois mode of production - which, therefore, will delineate the development of the Marxist categorial structure.

However, on the surface of the simple mercantile circulation, these contradictions are diluted and camouflaged, serving to the purpose of building the necessary appearance that the exchange relations are based on the bourgeois premises of freedom and equality among social agents. In this process, Marx (1941/2011) explains the crucial role of the category of money as responsible for the superficial dissolution of social relations of production, since it dissipates the concrete character of the work contained in the commodity and masks the socioeconomic disparities between the contracting parties - redounding to false assumption, sustained by the Classical Economy, that wealth production comes from the sphere of circulation. This premise leads to the mistaken understanding that the engine of exchange relations is shaped by the satisfaction of different human needs and that capital accumulation is the result of personal success, achieved by the greater cunning of the individuals and the opportunities for individual choices, free and egalitarian.

By subjecting simple mercantile circulation to the laws of the theory of value, Marx (1867/2017a) reveals the real purpose of this sphere - which is to accumulate capital - by supplanting the apparent goal of satisfying human needs through exchange. In the meantime, the logical-historical contradictions intrinsic to the singular commodity are expressed in the relations of exchange, so that the commodity and money categories become variations of the particular and universal expression of capital, which are interspersed to maintain the continuous movement of multiplication of value.

Therefore, the German author begins his analytical trajectory explaining the importance of apprehending the economic categories in light of the general laws that restrain their operation in a given historical transit. That is to say, its method of analysis reveals that, unlike previous modes of production, in the bourgeois social order, the capital relies on the alternation between economic categories as different moments of its realization, so as to temporally hide the contradiction inherent in the internal determinants of commodity in its singular form - and, therefore, to concretize the accumulation of value as an essential foundation of relations of exchange. It is imperative to point out that this temporary concealment does not overcome the original internal contradiction, but merely moves it toward other categories of expression of the capitalist mode of production. Hence, by subjecting the mercantile circulation to the foundations of the law of value, the historical-dialectical materialist analysis of bourgeois society revealed the antagonistic essence that outlines the movement of its realization, whose maximum expression lies in the contraposition between capital and labor, as we will see next.

The contradictions that boost the elliptical movement of capital

According to the above, Marx (1867/2017a) investigates the commodity in the context of simple commodity circulation in order to demonstrate that the individuals' consciousness about reality is partial precisely because of the inverted and chaotic character with which bourgeois social relations on the immediate surface are manifested. In the continuity of the analysis of capital as a value that is continuously valued, the author dedicates himself to investigate the formation of this surplus grandeur within the premise of equivalence between the subjects of exchange, as advocated by the bourgeois ideology. Obedience to this premise results in the conclusion that the formation of this surplus must come from the consumption of "a commodity whose own use value possessed the peculiar characteristic of being a source of value, whose own consumption was therefore the objectification of work and, therefore, creation of value" (Marx, 1867/2017a, p.242). The only commodity whose consumption results in the production of more value is the labor force which, for the continuous

realization of the purposes of capital, must be accessible in the sphere of circulation. This availability of the labor force for sale, on the other hand, has as its determinant the deprivation of workers from their means of life, that is, the private appropriation of the means of production - which will outline the social relations of production of the bourgeois world (Marx, 1941/2011, 1867/2017a).

Thus, the apex of the expression of the premises of bourgeois equality and liberty culminates in its exact opposite: in the deep economic inequalities between usurpers of the means of production and workers, who sell their living essence in exchange for conditions of survival, becoming slaves of the dictates of capital. The reified character of relations on the surface of simple circulation, which asserts the common good as the major objective of exchange relations, conceals wage slavery which promotes the maximum expression of the usurpation of the labor of others - that is, the ultimate purpose of capital to accumulate value at the expense of the working class.

In the meantime, the effective domination of capital is imposed by the condition of submission of the worker to the imperatives of the productive process, which deprives him of any possibility of control of the activity and the product of the work he performs. In the quest to assert itself as a totality, capital dominates the management of the whole logic of production, subjugating the work to its designs and internalizing it as a moment of its realization - in order to reach, although externally, the status of the protagonist of wealth production (Grespan, 2012).

Therefore, the capital needs to hide the fact that it is fully dependent on the labor force to be valued; for this, it poses itself as the subject of the process of its production and valorization, usurping the real attributes of the category of labor and separating it from the human-generic wealth produced by it. It strives, therefore, to transmute it in its exact opposite, that is, in "*absolute poverty*: poverty not as a lack, but as a complete exclusion of objective wealth" (Marx, 1941/2011, p. 230, emphasis added by the author). Such conditions are imposed as concrete conditioning bases of the life of individuals.

Based on a false premise, the capital builds itself up provisionally and apparently as a whole by reducing labor to the transitory expression of its constitution, masking the vital role of this category in the process of production and valorization of value. In this plot, it uses false assertions to announce itself as self-sufficient in the process of its creation and multiplication. However, its need to strip and deny the category that originates all the production of wealth - and therefore guarantees the continued consolidation of its self-valorizing purpose - reveals its full subjection to the labor force, which continues to act as the real source of surplus value and, therefore, as the only real parameter of capital measurement.

It is thus established the contradiction inherent in the category of labor, which is deprived of the means to its accomplishment and, therefore, to affirm its condition of totality in the process of production of human-generic objectifications - which presupposes subjecting capital to the dictates of its accomplishment. In this sense, as already pointed out, because it is excluded from the objective wealth that it produces, this category represents, according to Marx (1941/2011) absolute poverty. On the other hand, it represents the living principle of value, from which originates all the objectification of human capacities, synthesizing in its constitution the concretization of all the wealth of capital. In the author's words, "these entirely contradictory propositions condition each other and result from the essence of labor, for it is presupposed by the capital as an antithesis, as the antithetical existence of capital and, on the other hand, presupposes the capital" (Marx, 1941, p. 230).

In accordance with the categorial disposition developed by Marx (1867/2017a, 1894/2017b, 1885/2014), just as the internal contradictions of the commodity manifest themselves in capitalist exchange relations, the mutually exclusive dictates intrinsic to the category of work in the bourgeois logic are exteriorized in their opposition to capital. The synthesis of this antagonism, which forms the contradictory nucleus of the bourgeois mode of production, consists in the fact that the ultimate aim of capital to value itself uninterruptedly depends entirely on the production of wealth upon the category of labor. Capital, however, must simultaneously camouflage the potential of this category in asserting itself as a totality - and therefore in subjecting it to its premises - by seizing its characteristics and denying it as the true source of value.

Objectively, this opposition is expressed in the productive logic, in which capital, in an attempt to forge its false self-sufficiency, increases the proportion of constant capital - machinery - in relation to variable capital - labor force. In this sense, capital restricts the participation of the substantial origin of

value in the productive process, which sustains its existence as a value that values itself (Marx, 1885/2014, 1867/2017a). The parameters of valorization are amplified and, at the same time, the bases that build it are reduced, resulting in an antagonism which jeopardizes the capital's own survival (Grespan, 2012). For this reason, Marx's analysis asserts that the essential contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production tend to supplant it, since its purposes are too limited in relation to the potential of the categorial articulations that sustain it.

In this intrinsic tendency to overcome its own logic of existence lies the revelation of the interiority of the capital as a totality that moves from the coexistence of diametrically opposed realities - a premise which is constructed upon the investigation of the commodity as a minimum unit of analysis in the sphere of capital in general. Thus the analytical trajectory delimited by historical and dialectical materialism reveals that the support of the bourgeois mode of production rests on the concomitance of mutually exclusive forces from their most abstract and fundamental categories, corroborating the methodological presupposition which preconceives that within the elementary concept of capital "must be contained in *itself* its civilizational tendencies etc.; they cannot appear, as it has been in economic theories hitherto, as mere external consequences" (Marx, 1941/2011, p.338, emphasis added by the author).

In this context, Marx (1867/2017a) asserts that this antagonistic essence of capital - which from its primary configurations takes place in the concomitance of contradictory tendencies - does not reach resolution within the bourgeois socioeconomic configuration; on the contrary, its insurmountability is the essential condition for the continuous reproduction of capitalist social relations of production. For this reason, the author compares it to an elliptical movement, which is concretized depending on the coexistence of opposing forces:

The development of commodity does not eliminate these contradictions, but creates the way in which they can move. This is, in general, the method by which real contradictions are solved. For example, there is a contradiction in the fact that one body is attracted to another and at the same time constantly away from it. The ellipse is one of the forms of movement in which this contradiction takes place and is resolved (Marx, 1867/2017a, p. 178).

It is in the fragility of these contradictions that capital sustains the bases of its realization, so that within its own presuppositions the potential forces for its overcoming are forged. Consequently, in order to refute its historicity and finitude, the capital loses sight of the real substantial source of value, thus refraining from the actual criteria which refer to the measure of its self-valorization. In view of this, "it is its tendency to distribute itself in right proportions, but its tendency is also necessary to go beyond proportion - for it pursues surplus labor, excess productivity, surplus consumption, etc." (Marx, 1941/2011 p.338). Thus, in line with the movement of exposing the contradictions inherent in bourgeois economic categories, the Marxian method reveals that just as the apex of simple commodity equality culminates in full inequality - as discussed above - the apex of proportion unfolds in disproportion and consequently redounds to the maximum expression of the denial of capital (Grespan, 2012).

The scientific-revolutionary character of historical and dialectical materialism

The present exhibition leads to the realization that the mismatch between bourgeois logic and objective reality consists in its inability to predict the unfolding of the dynamics of capital, given the arduous task in which it endeavors to adulterate the premises that expose the ephemerality of its supposed self-sufficiency. Positivist formal logic appears at the service of this adulteration, so as to forge, in the inexactness of the immediately apparent surface, illusory devices to conceal the visceral contradictions which they construct and which, at the same time, weaken the capitalist system. But this effort to mask the transient nature of the capital as a valued value results in the exact opposite of what it intended - in the unmeasured value. Therefore, the exposition of the dialectical face of bourgeois society reveals the transgressor character inherent in the antagonisms that sustain it; that is, the impoverished assumptions of the capital are too limited in the face of the developmental potential to be achieved by the categories created within them, so that they continually tend to corrupt their general laws of operation and reproduction (Marx, 1941/2011).

Thus the scientific character of the Marxist method is inseparable from its revolutionary bias, since it reveals an important gap in the capitalist logic of expropriation - that is, the mistaken criteria of self-measurement arising from the attempt of the capital to put itself as a totality. This revelation leads to two important assertions. On the one hand, it reveals that the collapse which the bourgeois mode of production attempts at all costs to avoid engendered in its own premises, in the forces of its own making which tend to revolutionize and subvert it. On the other hand, it denounces the narrow reach of bourgeois scientific presuppositions, which are unable to follow the parameters of the valorization movement when it tends to violate the very limits of the law of value - taking the apex of the logic of the bourgeois mode of production to be converted into its opposite, i.e. devaluation (Marx, 1885/2014).

In short, Marxian research has abstraction as the principal analytical tool, which assumes the presuppositions of the minimal unity of analysis of bourgeois society, the historical delimitation of its contradictions, and the expression of the general laws of its operation from its most elementary categories. These analytical premises support the construction of the categorial architecture revealing the movement engendered by the visceral antagonisms of the bourgeois mode of production - which are requalified until they are expressed in the violation of the very purposes of capital.

After outlining the main premises of the historical and dialectical materialism that underpinned Marx's radical critique of capitalist society, we will present the analogous path followed by Marxist psychology in the investigation of the human psyche.

The Marxian categorial movement and the historical understanding of the human psyche

In the initiative of constructing a scientific psychology in the light of Marxian assumptions, Vygotsky (1982/1991) identified that traditional psychology had approached its object of study from an atomistic and disjointed bias, analogous to the way in which Classical Economy had done with the central categories of bourgeois society. Thus, in his analysis of the crisis of psychology, Vygotsky (1982/1991) denounced the insufficiency of the dichotomies and fragmentations derived from the presuppositions of traditional psychology, which resulted in unilateral assertions, deprived of historicity, about psychological phenomena. The exposition of these methodological limits led to the requalification of theoretical-conceptual articulations which, based on the methodological presuppositions of Marxism, established a new framework for the understanding of the psyche by announcing it as a cross-functional system to be grasped in its entirety.

Thus, in the elaboration of this new proposal, Vygotsky (1982/1991) recovers the premises of historical and dialectical materialism, which begin to guide its search for methodological paths that legitimize the development of a Marxist psychological science. In the present article, as pointed out in the introduction, we will focus on the support provided by the three methodological assumptions that underpinned Marxian criticism of bourgeois society - namely, the minimal unit of analysis; the categorial historicization; and the essential contradictory tendencies of the studied phenomenon - in the construction of the Vygotskian analysis that revolutionized the study of psychological processes. We will now see how each of these pillars grounded the historical understanding of the human psyche.

The essential apprehension of reality and minimal unit of psychic analysis

In accordance with the methodological affiliation to the Marxian premises, Marxist psychology corroborates abstraction as a theoretical tool which acts as a mediator of the essential analysis of objective reality and overcomes conclusions based on the immediate definitions of the apparent surface (Vygotsky 1982/1991). In this way, the relation between the essence and the appearance of reality proposed by the Marxian method in the presuppositions of apprehension of the objective world and of conceptual formation is translated into the psychological sphere. That is, the foundations of Marxist psychology stem from the premise that objective reality cannot be immediately grasped by human consciousness as an exact and reliable mechanical copy of the external world (Martins, 2013). The capture and mastery of the essential relations that delineate the determinants of reality come from the complexification of mental processes, conquered through the vital human activity - the social work - that

interposes itself in the dialectical relations of appropriation of signs of the culture and objectification of the essentially human characteristics (Vygotsky, 1983/1995, 1934/2012).

Therefore, the Marxist analysis of the human psyche follows the methodological premise that advocates the search for the abstraction of the elemental unit of analysis - a category that should synthesize in it the general tendencies of development of the studied phenomenon. As already explained, the beginning of the Marxian analytical trajectory on capital is marked by the definition of commodity as an elementary and fundamental form of representation of the capitalist society. Similarly, the consonance with this methodological presupposition led Marxist psychology to subordinate its research design to a given historical and social form of psychism; this process resulted in the identification of the category that synthesizes the elemental expression of the psychological processes that constitute human subjectivity. Within these premises, Vygotsky (1934/2012) announced the sign, manifested especially in the meaning of the word, as the element representative of the minimal unit of analysis of the human psyche, since this category contains in itself the elementary contradictory tendencies which outline the presuppositions of development of consciousness. In the words of the author, "(...) such unit can be found in the internal aspect of the word, that is, in its *meaning*" (Vygotski, 1934, page 17, emphasis added by the author).

Hence, it is established that the precept which delimits the qualitative leap humanizing the psyche consists in the unity between thought and language - representative of the decisive psychic transformations arising from the mediation of the signs of culture - whose indivisible elemental properties are synthesized in the meaning of the word. This category is an inalienable part of verbalized thought, in which each word synthesizes a generalization" (...) which reflects reality in a completely different way from how immediate sensations and perceptions do" (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 18). Consequently, as it was established in the Marxian analysis of capital, the announcement of the determinants that define the minimum unit of analysis establishes the parameters for the delimitation of the two other pillars of methodological support of the study of the human psyche in the light of the Marxian premises, namely, the historical assumptions of the studied categories and the contradictory essence that drives them.

The historicization of the categories of the study of the human psyche

As we have previously pointed out, from the essential contradictions inherent in the commodity category, Marx (1941/2011) points to the bourgeois social organization as a superior form of mode of production in comparison with previous social organizations, since only in it economic categories find objective means to be fully realized. The design of these presuppositions leads historical-cultural psychology to the analogous recognition of human consciousness as the superior expression of the psyche, which has its general functioning ruled by new laws whose premises revolutionize its potential for development. Although it contains categories corresponding to other forms of animal psyche because of its specificity to raise qualitative leaps which are governed by not only biological but, above all, social-historical laws, human consciousness offers to these categories conditions never reached in earlier forms of the psyche (Vygotsky, 1983/1995, 1934/2012).

Thus, in the socioeconomic sphere, the Marxian theory revealed the general assumptions of the functioning of the bourgeois social organization - which subordinate the economic categories to the law of value and transmute their development potential, resulting in a more advanced configuration of a mode of production. Similarly, Marxist psychology has committed itself to overcoming the hegemonically linear analyses and anti-historical analyses of the psyche by identifying the specificities and particularities of its more developed expression - the human consciousness - in the light of general development laws which pursue new levels of psychological processes.

Therefore, in obedience to the logic of Marxian categorial exposition, Vygotsky (1982/1991, 1934/2012) developed psychological categories in their fundamental interdependencies and contradictions in the light of the historical-cultural laws that reconfigure and requalify them. This methodological trajectory allowed the identification of the contradictory nucleus that edits the singular composition of consciousness. In this sense, Marxist psychology finds in the qualitative leap of cultural development of functional processes the founding prerogative of the human psyche, distinguishing it

essentially from the animal psyche and revealing the general principles of its functioning, which enable it to apprehend the multiple determinants of the objective reality and therefore to transform it (Vygotsky, 1983/1995, 1934/2012).

The elliptical movement of realization of the inter-functional psychism

The assertion of the sign objectified in the meaning of the word as the elemental unit of analysis of the human psychism - whose configuration is subordinated to historical-cultural laws - outlined the presuppositions for the identification of the contradictory tendencies inherent in the functioning of the object of the present study. The social bases of psychic development are asserted based on this prerogative, whose natural forms are superimposed by complex, culturally formed behaviors, guiding the specificity of human conduct (Martins 2013).

These assumptions advocate the unveiling of the antagonistic and inter-functional nature of the psychism of historical-cultural psychology, from which the intrinsic correlation of this theory with historical and dialectical materialism unfolds. In the study of the economic categories of bourgeois society, Marx (1941/2011) showed that the contradictions inherent in the minimal unit of analysis - that is, commodity - are not solved, but are expressed in the other categorial relations, so that each element constitutes the progressive complexity of the conceptualization of capital as a result of the irresolvable contradictions contained in the previous element. Therefore, the nuclear antagonism between capital and labor - which is the essence of the bourgeois mode of production - can only be understood on the basis of the movement generated by the tensions that articulate and deny the categories commodity, money, and capital.

In the meantime, the presupposition of the contradictory core delineated by Marxian analysis forms the third methodological premise in focus in the present article, which supports the dialectical understanding of the conscious psychism. From this foundation we understand the realization of the contradictions between the biological and cultural component and also between individual and social components of human conduct, expressed in the visceral articulation between the elementary and higher functional processes. This articulation reproduces the movement of psychic development within the elliptical configuration delineated by historical and dialectical materialism, that is, dependent on the existence of fundamental contradictions to be continuously realized and transposed. Therefore, the link between psychological functions is based on the dialectical contrast between the biological sphere and the cultural sphere as a unit of opposites; this intrinsic antagonism is expressed in the joints between the functional processes that take place by means of the tension synthesized in these mutually exclusive dimensions. In other words, the non-resolution of this antagonism takes shape in the requalification itself, which makes possible the specificity of the trajectory of human psychic development.

In line with the methodological premises of Marxism, this irresolute nuclear contradiction externalizes itself in the tension between the interpersonal and intrapersonal spheres, resulting in the general genetic law of the cultural development of the psyche (Vygotsky, 1983/1995) - which advocates that functional processes emerge first in the interpsychic plane, and are later internalized as intrapsychic property. Therefore, the essentially human configuration of the psyche is formed upon the demands of culture; in this process, social relations require progressively more accurate specifications, which result in the cross-functional conformation of the structuring psychological processes of the conscious psyche - whose articulation, in turn, takes place in the co-dependence of these antagonistic dimensions.

In this sense, the essential contradictions contained in the minimal unit of analysis of human consciousness - signs - synthesize the inter-functionality with which historical-cultural psychology focuses on psychic processes which, in this perspective, cannot be understood apart from each other or from secondary attachments. Thus, the transformations that arise along the development of the psyche do not occur in each psychological function alone, but in the inter-functional relations and nexuses which articulate new compositions as they reach more complex levels of development (Martins, 2013). These new stages materialize through the ellipse that moves the overlap between the elementary and higher processes - delineated, in turn, by the demands of the interpersonal sphere.

Such demands are oriented especially by the socialization of the symbolic collection systematized culturally and transmitted through the educational processes, which requalify the intrapersonal sphere.

In this process of requalification, the symbolic domains are continually transmuted, resulting in changes in the generalization structures and in the meanings of the resulting words, which promote progressively more accurate and multidetermined apprehensions of objective reality. Consequently, as with the understanding of the commodity category in the process of analytic enrichment pioneered by Marx (1867/2017a), the evolution of word meanings is built on the tensions of the contradictory nucleus of psychic development, whose antagonistic dynamics enriches progressively the world view of individuals, giving to the human beings the potential to understand and guide the course of their own history.

Final considerations

This brief exposition had the objective of demonstrating that the Marxian analysis of bourgeois society and the Vygotskian analysis of the human psyche are based on the same methodological axes, which advocate the historical-dialectical materialist apprehension of the phenomena on screen. The Marxist epistemological basis of historical-cultural psychology is thus corroborated, which underlies the understanding of the dialectical tensions that build up the social nature of the human psyche.

As we have shown, Marx's theory of value (1941/2011) - in which the scientific method delineating the critique of the political economy is carried out by the author - asserted that the comprehension of the reality circumscribed to the delimitations put by bourgeois science plays a fundamental role in the process of domination. The origins of bourgeois formal logic demarcate its historical function of reproducing the purposes of capital, attributing a supposedly scientific character to skewed and distorted interpretations of objective reality. Thus, anchoring the understanding of the psyche into presuppositions that legitimize the current social relations of exploitation necessarily results in fragmented, superficial and incomplete apprehensions, which naturalize socially and historically constructed processes and ignore the fundamental contradictions that mobilize and requalify the integral development of human being.

Thus, the article on screen aimed to contribute to the demarcation of historical-cultural psychology as a theory whose methodological bases historically distinguish the premises that build the human consciousness in a given social organization. For this, we understand that it is essential to rescue the presuppositions of historical and dialectical materialism in Marxian work in articulation with the movement of understanding the psyche as a cross-functional system, which announces the antagonistic prerogatives that build the historical complexity of human subjectivity.

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