

Preface

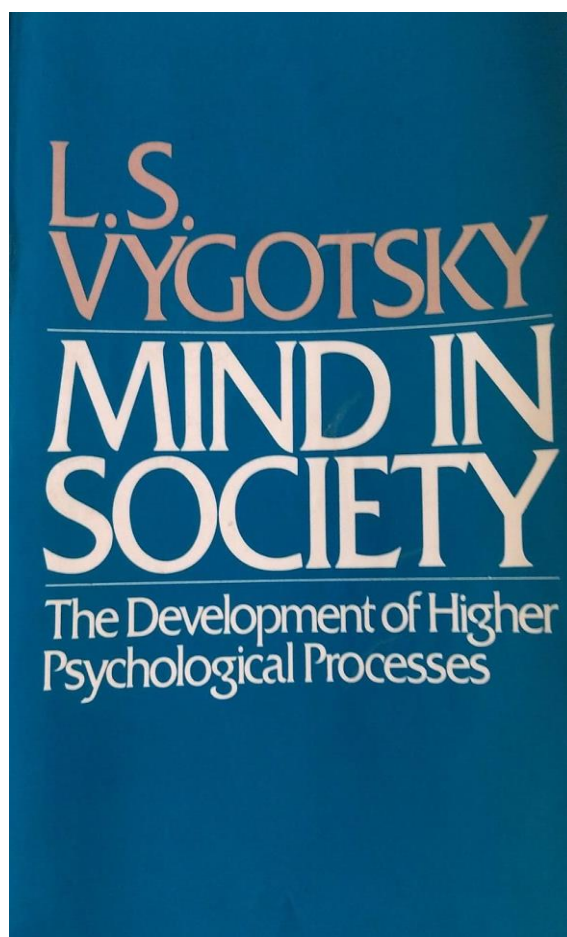
The present work consists of a pedagogical exhibition of the book

L.S.
VYGOTSKY
MIND IN
SOCIETY

The Development of Higher
Psychological Processes

Edited by Michael Cole
Vera-John-Steiner
Sylvia Scribner
Ellen Souberman

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England
1978



Editors' Preface

Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky has figured prominently in American Psychology since the publication in 1962 of his monograph *Thought and Language*. Five years ago, at the urging of Vygotsky's student Alexander Luria, we agreed to edit a collection of Vygotsky's essays which would reflect the general theoretical enterprise of which the study of the relation between thought and language was one important aspect. Luria made available to us rough translations of two of Vygotsky's works. The first, "Tool and Symbol in Children's Development" (1930), had never been published. The second was a translation of a monograph entitled *The History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions*, which appeared in the second volume of Vygotsky's writings published in Moscow in 1960. A cursory study of these essays quickly convinced us that the scope of Vygotsky's work reached considerably beyond *Thought and Language*. Furthermore, we came to believe that the image of Vygotsky as a sort of early neobehaviorist of cognitive development—an impression held by many of our colleagues—was strongly believed by these two works.

We have constructed the first four chapters of this volume from "Tool and Symbol." The fifth chapter summarizes the major theoretical and methodological points made in "Tool and Symbol" and applies them to a classic problem in cognitive psychology, the nature of choice reaction. This chapter was taken from section 3 of *The History of the Development of Higher Psychological Functions*. Chapters 6 and 8 (learning and development, and the developmental precursors of writing) are from a posthumously published collection of essays entitled *Mental Development of Children and the Process of Learning* (1935). Chapter 7, on play, is based on a lecture delivered at the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute in 1933 and published in *Voprosi Psikhologii (Problems of Psychology)* in 1966. Complete references are given in the list of Vygotsky's work that follows the text of this volume.

At several places we have inserted material from additional sources in order to fully explicate the meaning of the text. In most cases these importations are from sections of *The History of the Development of higher Psychological Functions* other than the one included here; the rest are taken from other essays which appears in either the 1956 or the 1960 volumes of collected works. In a few cases passages have been taken from the work of the Vygotsky's students or collaborators which provide concrete examples of experimental procedures or results which the original text describes with extreme brevity. References of these sources are given in the notes.

In putting separate essays together, we have taken significant liberties. The reader will encounter here not a literal translation of Vygotsky but rather our edited translation of Vygotsky, from which we have omitted material that seemed redundant and to which we have added material that seemed to make his points clearer. As other editors have noted, Vygotsky's style is extremely difficult. He wrote copiously and many of his manuscripts have never been properly edited. In addition, during frequent periods of illness he would dictate his papers—a practice which resulted in repetitions and dense or elliptical prose. Gaps in the original manuscripts make them even less accessible now than they might have been at the time they were written. Because proper references were rarely given, we have supplied our best guess as to the exact sources to which Vygotsky referred. The process of tracking down and reading these sources has itself proved a very rewarding enterprise; many of his contemporaries were fascinatingly modern in important respects. We realize that in tampering with the original we may have distorted history; however, we hope that by stating our procedures and by adhering as closely as possible to the principles and content of the work, we have not distorted Vygotsky's meaning.

We owe a special debt to the late Alexander R. Luria for providing an initial translation of much of the material included in chapters 1-5, for tirelessly tracking down references and expanding upon details of experiments, and for reading our manuscript. Chapters 6 and 7 were translated by Martin Lopez-Morillas. Chapter 5 and parts of chapters 1 - 5 were translated by Michael Cole. We wish to thank James Wertsch for his assistance in translating and interpreting especially difficult passages.

The editing of these writings has occupied us for several years. Working in separate locations, educated in differing intellectual traditions, each team of editors found certain material of special interest. Since there is

not one but many issues to be illuminated by such a complex body of thought, we have written two essays reflecting various aspects of “reading Vygotsky.”

Vera Jhon-Steiner
Ellen Souberman
University of New Mexico

Michael Cole
Sylvia Scribner
The Rockefeller University

Contents

Biographical Note on L. S. Vygotsky 2
Introduction **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

Basic Theory and Data

1. Tool and Symbol in Child Development . **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
2. The Development of Perception and Attention; **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
3. Mastery of Memory and Thinking **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
4. Internalization of Higher Psychological Functions; **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
5. Problems of Method **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

Educational Implications

6. Interaction between Learning and Development; **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
7. The Role of Play in Development **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

Afterword **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

VERA JOHN - STEINER AND ELLEN SOUBERMAN **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

- ▶ Concepts of Development **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
- ▶ Educational Implications **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**
- ▶ Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Approach; **¡Error! Marcador no definido.**

The spider carries out operations reminiscent of a weaver and the boxes which bees build in the sky could disgrace the work of many architects. But even the worst architect differs from the most able bee from the very outset in that before he builds a box out of boards he has already constructed it in his head. At the end of the work process he obtains a result which already existed in his mind before he began to build. The architect not only changes the form given to him by nature, within the constraints imposed by nature, he also carries out a purpose of his own which defines the means and the character of the activity to which he must subordinate his will.

Karl Marx, *Capital*.

It is precisely *the alteration of nature by men*, not the nature as such, which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought.

Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*

Biographical Note on L. S. Vygotsky

Lev Semyonovitch Vygotsky was born in November 5, 1898, in the town of Orsha, northeast of Minsk in Byelorussia. In 1913 he completed gymnasium in Gomel with a gold medal. In 1917, after graduating from Moscow University with a specialization in literature, he began his literary research.

From 1917 to 1923 Vygotsky taught literature and psychology in a school in Gomel, where he also directed the theater section of the adult education center and gave speeches and lectures on problems of literature and science. During this period Vygotsky founded the literary journal *Verask*. Here he published his first literary research, later reissued as *The Psychology of Art*. He also founded a psychological laboratory in the Teacher Training Institute, where he gave a course on psychology, the contents of which were later published in *Pedagogical Psychology*.

In 1924 Vygotsky moved to Moscow and began to work first at the Institute of Psychology and then in the Institute of Defectology, which he founded. At the same time, he directed a department for the education for physically defective and mentally retarded children in Narcompros (Peoples committee Education), and taught courses in the Krupskaya Academy of Communist Education, the Second Moscow State University (later the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute), and the Herten Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad. Between 1925 and 1934 Vygotsky gathered around him a large group of young scientists working in the areas of psychology, defectology, and mental abnormality. An interest in medicine led Vygotsky simultaneously to undertake medical training, first in the medical institute in Moscow and later in Kharkov, where he gave a psychology course in the Ukrainian Psychoneurological Academy. Not long before his death Vygotsky was invited to head the department of psychology in the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine. He died of tuberculosis June 11, 1934.

A. R. Luria