

Lev Vygotsky

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Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896 – June 11, 1934) was a Soviet psychologist, the founder of a theory of human cultural and bio-social development commonly referred to as [cultural-historical psychology](#), and leader of the [Vygotsky Circle](#).

Vygotsky's main work was in developmental psychology, and he proposed a theory of the development of higher cognitive functions in children that saw reasoning as emerging through practical activity in a social environment. During the earlier period of his career he argued that the development of reasoning was mediated by signs and symbols, and therefore contingent on cultural practices and language as well as on universal cognitive processes.

Vygotsky also posited a concept of the [zone of proximal development](#), often understood to refer to the way in which the acquisition of new knowledge is dependent on previous learning, as well as the availability of instruction.

During his lifetime Vygotsky's theories were controversial within the Soviet Union. In the 1930s Vygotsky's ideas were introduced in the West where they remained virtually unknown until the 1970s when they became a central component of the development of new paradigms in developmental and educational psychology. While initially Vygotsky's theories were ignored in the West, they are today widely known, although scholars do not always agree with

them, or agree about what he meant. The early 21st century has seen scholarly reevaluations of many of Vygotsky's central concepts and theories.^[1] A *Review of General Psychology* survey, published in 2002, ranked Vygotsky as the 83rd most cited psychologist of the 20th century.^[2]

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Biography

Lev Vygotsky was born in the town of [Orsha](#), in the [Russian Empire](#) (present-day [Belarus](#)) into a non-religious middle class [Russian Jewish](#) family. His father was a banker. He was raised in the city of [Gomel](#), Belarus, where he obtained both public and private education. In 1913 Vygotsky was admitted to the [Moscow State University](#) through a "[Jewish Lottery](#)" to meet a three percent Jewish student quota for entry in Moscow and Saint Petersburg universities.^[3] There he studied law and, in parallel, he attended lectures at fully official, but privately funded and non degree granting [Shaniavskii Moscow City People's University](#)".^[4] His early interests were in the arts and he might have aspired to be a literary critic, fascinated with the [formalism](#) of his time.

Upon graduation in 1917, Vygotsky returned to Gomel, where he lived after the [October Socialist Revolution](#) of 1917 happened. There is virtually no information about his life during the years of the German occupation and the Civil War until the Bolsheviks captured the town in 1919. Subsequently Vygotsky was an active participant of major social transformation under the Bolshevik rule and a fairly prominent representative of the Bolshevik government in Gomel from 1919 to 1923. For unclear reasons, around the early 1920s, he changed his birth name from Vygodskii (with "d") into Vygotskii (with middle "t") and his patronymic from original Jewish "Simkhovich" to Slavic "Semenovich".^[5]

In January 1924, Vygotsky took part in the Second All-Russian Psychoneurological Congress in Leningrad. Soon thereafter, Vygotsky received an invitation to become a research fellow at the Psychological Institute in Moscow. Vygotsky moved to Moscow with new wife Roza Smekhova. He began his career at the Psychological Institute as a "staff scientist, second class".^{[6][7]} By the end of 1925, Vygotsky completed his dissertation in 1925 on "The Psychology of Art" (not published until the 1960s) and a book "Pedagogical Psychology" that was apparently created on the basis of lecture notes that he prepared back in Gomel as a psychology instructor at local educational establishments. In summer 1925 he made his first and only trip abroad to a London congress on the education of the deaf.^[8] Upon return to the Soviet Union, he was hospitalized due to relapse of tuberculosis and, having miraculously survived, remained an invalid and out of job until the end of 1926.^{[9][10]} His dissertation was accepted as the prerequisite of scholarly degree, which was awarded to Vygotsky in fall 1925 *in absentia*.

After his release from hospital Vygotsky did theoretical and methodological work on the crisis in psychology, but never finished the draft of the manuscript and interrupted his work on it around mid-1927. The manuscript was later published with notable editorial interventions and distortions in 1982 and

presented by the editors as one of the most important Vygotsky's works.^{[11][12][13][14][15]} In this early manuscript, Vygotsky argued for the formation of a general psychology that could unite the naturalist objectivist strands of psychological science with the more philosophical approaches of Marxist orientation. However, he also harshly criticized those of his colleagues who attempted to build a "Marxist Psychology" as an alternative to the naturalist and philosophical schools. He argued that if one wanted to build a truly Marxist Psychology, there were no shortcuts to be found by merely looking for applicable quotes in Marx' writings. Rather one should look for a methodology that was in accordance with the Marxian spirit.^[16]

In 1926-30 Vygotsky worked on a research programme investigating the development of higher cognitive functions of logical memory, selective attention, decision making and language comprehension, from early forms of primal psychological functions. During this period he gathered a group of collaborators including Alexander Luria, Leonid Sakharov, Boris Varshava, Alexei Leontiev, Leonid Zankov and several others. Vygotsky guided his students in researching this phenomenon from three different angles: The instrumental angle, which tried to understand the ways in which humans use objects as aides of mediation in memory and reasoning. A developmental approach, focusing on how children acquire the higher cognitive functions during development. And a culture-historical approach, studying the ways in which forms of mediation and developmental trajectories are shaped by different social and cultural patterns of interaction.^[16]

In early 1930s Vygotsky experienced deep crisis, personal and theoretical, and after a period of massive self-criticism made an attempt at a radical revision of his theory. The work of the representatives of the Gestalt psychology and other holistic scholars was instrumental in this theoretical shift. In 1932-1934 Vygotsky was aiming at establishing a psychological theory of consciousness, but this theory because of his death remained only in a very sketchy and unfinished form.

Life and scientific legacy

Vygotsky was a pioneering psychologist and his major works span six separate volumes, written over roughly 10 years, from *Psychology of Art* (1925) to *Thought and Language [or Thinking and Speech]* (1934). Vygotsky's interests in the fields of developmental psychology, child development, and education were extremely diverse. His philosophical framework includes insightful interpretations of the cognitive role of mediation tools, as well as the

re-interpretation of well-known concepts in psychology such as **internalization** of knowledge. Vygotsky introduced the notion of **zone of proximal development**, an innovative metaphor capable of describing the potential of human cognitive development. His work covered such diverse topics as the origin and the **psychology of art**, development of higher **mental functions**, **philosophy of science** and **methodology of psychological research**, the relation between **learning** and **human development**, concept formation, interrelation between **language and thought** development, play as a psychological phenomenon, **learning disabilities**, and abnormal human development (aka *defectology*). His scientific thinking underwent several major transformations throughout his career, but generally Vygotsky's legacy can be divided into two fairly distinct periods and the transitional phase between the two during which Vygotsky experienced the crisis in his theory and personal life. These are the **mechanistic** "instrumental" period of the 1920s, integrative "**holistic**" period of the 1930s, and the transitional years of, roughly, 1929-1931. Each of these periods is characterized by its distinct themes and theoretical innovations.

"Instrumental" period (1920s)

Cultural mediation and internalization

Vygotsky studied child development and the significant roles of **cultural mediation** and **interpersonal communication**. He observed how higher mental functions developed through these interactions, and also represented the shared knowledge of a culture. This process is known as internalization.^[17]

Internalization can be understood in one respect as "knowing how". For example, riding a bicycle or pouring a cup of milk are tools of the society and are initially outside and beyond the child. The mastery of these skills occurs through the activity of the child within society. A further aspect of internalization is *appropriation*, in which the child takes a tool and makes it his own, perhaps using it in a way unique to himself. Internalizing the use of a pencil allows the child to use it very much for his own ends rather than drawing exactly what others in society have drawn previously.

The period of crisis, criticism, and self-criticism (1929–1932)

In 1930s Vygotsky was engaged in massive reconstruction of his theory of his "instrumental" period of the 1920s. Around 1929-1930 he realized numerous deficiencies and imperfections of the earlier work of the Vygotsky Circle and criticized it on a number of occasions: in 1929,^[18] 1930,^[19] in 1931,^[20] and in

1932.^[21] Specifically, Vygotsky criticized his earlier idea of radical separation between the "lower" and "higher" psychological functions and, around 1932, appears to abandon it.^[22]

This Vygotsky's self-criticism was complemented by external criticism for a number of issues, including the separation between the "higher" and the "lower" psychological functions, impracticality and inapplicability of his theory in social practices (such as industry or education) during the time of rapid social change, and vulgar Marxist interpretation of human psychological processes. Critics also pointed to his overemphasis on the role of language and, on the other hand, the ignorance of the emotional factors in human development. Major figures in Soviet psychology such as **Sergei Rubinstein** criticized Vygotsky's notion of mediation and its development in the works of students. Following criticism and in response to generous offer from the highest officials in Soviet Ukraine, a major group of Vygotsky's associates, the members of the **Vygotsky Circle**, including **Luria**, **Mark Lebedinsky**, and **Leontiev**, moved from Moscow to Ukraine to establish the **Kharkov school of psychology**. In the second half of the 1930s, Vygotsky would be yet again criticized for his involvement in the cross-disciplinary study of the child known as **paedology** and uncritical borrowings from contemporary "bourgeois" science. Considerable critique came from the alleged Vygotsky's followers, such as Leontiev and members of his research group in Kharkov. Much of this early criticism was later discarded by these Vygotskian scholars themselves.

"Holistic" period (1932–1934)

The period of major revision of Vygotsky's theory and its transition from mechanist orientation of his 1920s to integrative holistic science of the 1930s. During this period Vygotsky was under particularly strong influence of holistic theories of German-American group of proponents of **Gestalt psychology**, most notably, the peripheral participants of the Gestalt movement **Kurt Goldstein** and **Kurt Lewin**. However, Vygotsky's work of this period remained largely fragmentary and unfinished and, therefore, unpublished.

Zone of proximal development

"**Zone of proximal development**" (ZPD) is Vygotsky's term for the range of tasks that a child is in the process of learning to complete. The lower limit of ZPD is the level of skill reached by the child working independently (also referred to as the child's actual developmental level). The upper limit is the level of potential

skill that the child is able to reach with the assistance of a more capable instructor.

Vygotsky viewed the ZPD as a way to better explain the relation between children's learning and cognitive development. Prior to the ZPD, the relation between learning and development could be boiled down to the following three major positions: 1) Development always precedes learning (e.g., [constructivism](#)): children first need to meet a particular maturation level before learning can occur; 2) Learning and development cannot be separated but instead occur simultaneously (e.g., [behaviorism](#)): essentially, learning is development; and 3) learning and development are separate but interactive processes (e.g., [gestaltism](#)): one process always prepares the other process, and vice versa. Vygotsky rejected these three major theories because he believed that learning always precedes development in the ZPD. In other words, through the assistance of a more capable person, a child is able to learn skills or aspects of a skill that go beyond the child's actual developmental or maturational level. Therefore, development always follows the child's potential to learn. In this sense, the ZPD provides a prospective view of cognitive development, as opposed to a retrospective view that characterizes development in terms of a child's independent capabilities.^[23]

Psychology of play

Less known is Vygotsky's research on [play](#), or children's games, as a psychological phenomenon and its role in the child's development. Through play the child develops abstract meaning separate from the objects in the world, which is a critical feature in the development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky gives the famous example of a child who wants to ride a horse but cannot. If the child were under three, he would perhaps cry and be angry, but around the age of three the child's relationship with the world changes:

Henceforth play is such that the explanation for it must always be that it is the imaginary, illusory realization of unrealizable desires. Imagination is a new formation that is not present in the consciousness of the very raw young child, is totally absent in animals, and represents a specifically human form of conscious activity. Like all functions of consciousness, it originally arises from action.

— *Lev Vygotsky*,^[23]

The child wishes to ride a horse but cannot, so he picks up a stick and stands astride of it, thus pretending he is riding a horse. The stick is a *pivot*. "Action according to rules begins to be determined by ideas, not by objects.... It is terribly difficult for a child to sever thought (the meaning of a word) from object. Play is a transitional stage in this direction. At that critical moment when a stick

– i.e., an object – becomes a pivot for severing the meaning of horse from a real horse, one of the basic psychological structures determining the child's relationship to reality is radically altered".

As children get older, their reliance on pivots such as sticks, dolls and other toys diminishes. They have *internalized* these pivots as imagination and abstract concepts through which they can understand the world. "The old adage that 'children's play is imagination in action' can be reversed: we can say that imagination in adolescents and schoolchildren is play without action".^[23]

Vygotsky also referred to the development of social rules that form, for example, when children play house and adopt the roles of different family members. Vygotsky cites an example of two sisters playing being sisters. The rules of behavior between them that go unnoticed in daily life are consciously acquired through play. As well as social rules, the child acquires what we now refer to as *self-regulation*. For example, when a child stands at the starting line of a running race, she may well desire to run immediately so as to reach the finish line first, but her knowledge of the social rules surrounding the game and her desire to enjoy the game enable her to regulate her initial impulse and wait for the start signal.

Thought and Language

Perhaps Vygotsky's most important contribution concerns the inter-relationship of language development and thought. This concept, explored in Vygotsky's book *Thought and Language*, (Russian: *Myshlenie i rech*, alternative translation: *Thinking and Speaking*) establishes the explicit and profound connection between speech (both silent inner speech and oral language), and the development of mental concepts and cognitive awareness. Vygotsky described inner speech as being qualitatively different from normal (external) speech. Although Vygotsky believed inner speech developed from external speech via a gradual process of internalization, with younger children only really able to "think out loud," he claimed that in its mature form inner speech would be unintelligible to anyone except the thinker, and would not resemble spoken language as we know it (in particular, being greatly compressed). Hence, thought itself develops socially.

Language starts as a tool external to the child used for social interaction. The child guides personal behavior by using this tool in a kind of self-talk or "thinking out loud." Initially, self-talk is very much a tool of social interaction and this tapers to negligible levels when the child is alone or with deaf children. Gradually, self-talk is used more as a tool for self-directed and self-regulating

behavior. Because speaking has been appropriated and internalized, self-talk is no longer present around the time the child starts school. Self-talk "develops along a rising not a declining, curve; it goes through an evolution, not an involution. In the end, it becomes inner speech" (Vygotsky, 1987, pg 57).

Speaking has thus developed along two lines: the line of social communication and the line of inner speech, by which the child mediates and regulates his or her activity through their thoughts. The thoughts, in turn, are mediated by the **semiotics** (the meaningful signs) of inner speech. This is not to say that thinking cannot take place without language, but rather that it is mediated by it and thus develops to a much higher level of sophistication. Just as the birthday cake as a sign provides much deeper meaning than its physical properties allow, inner speech as a sign provides much deeper meaning than the lower psychological functions would otherwise allow.

Death (1934) and posthumous fame

Vygotsky died of **tuberculosis** on June 11, 1934, at the age of 37, in **Moscow, Soviet Union**. Immediately after his death Vygotsky was proclaimed one of the leading psychologists in the Soviet Union although his stellar reputation was somewhat undermined by the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of 1936 that denounced the mass movement, discipline and related social practice of the so-called **pedology**. Yet, even despite some criticisms and even censorship of his works—most notably, in the post-Stalin era in the Soviet Union of 1960s-1980s,—Vygotsky always remained among the most quoted scholars in the field and has become a **cult figure** for a number of contemporary intellectuals and practitioners in Russia and the international psychological and educational community alike.^[24]

Influence worldwide

Eastern Europe

In the **Soviet Union**, the work of the group of Vygotsky's students known as the **Vygotsky Circle** was vital for preserving and, in many respects, distorting the scientific legacy of Lev Vygotsky.^[25] The members of the group subsequently laid a foundation for Vygotskian psychology's systematic development in such diverse fields as the psychology of memory (**P. Zinchenko**), perception, sensation and movement (**Zaporozhets, Asnin, A. N. Leont'ev**), personality (**Lidiya Bozhovich, Asnin, A. N. Leont'ev**), will and volition (**Zaporozhets, A. N. Leont'ev, P. Zinchenko, L. Bozhovich, Asnin**), psychology of play (**G. D. Lukov,**

Daniil El'konin) and psychology of learning (P. Zinchenko, L. Bozhovich, D. El'konin), as well as the theory of step-by-step formation of mental actions (Pyotr Gal'perin), general psychological activity theory (A. N. Leont'ev) and psychology of action (Zaporozhets).^[25] Andrey Puzyrey elaborated the ideas of Vygotsky in respect of psychotherapy and even in the broader context of deliberate psychological intervention (psychotechnique), in general.^[26] In Hungary Laszlo Garai^[27] founded a Vygotskian research group.

North America

In North America, Vygotsky's work was known from the end of the 1920s through a series of publications in English, but it did not have a major impact on research in general. In 1962 a translation of his posthumous book *Thinking and Speech* that came out under the title *Thought and Language* did not seem to considerably change the situation. It was only after an eclectic compilation of partly rephrased and partly translated works of Vygotsky and his collaborators that, however, came out under Vygotsky's name in a book titled *Mind in Society* that the Vygotsky Boom started in the West: originally, in North America, and later, following the North American example, spread to other regions of the world. This version of Vygotskian science is typically associated with the names of its chief proponents Michael Cole, James Wertsch, their associates and followers, and is relatively well-known under the names of "cultural-historical activity theory" (aka CHAT) or, yet more distant from Vygotsky's legacy, "activity theory".^{[28][29][30]}

Scaffolding, a concept introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976, is closely related to the idea of ZPD, although Vygotsky never actually used the term.^[31] Scaffolding is changing the level of support to suit the cognitive potential of the child. Over the course of a teaching session, one can adjust the amount of guidance to fit the child's potential level of performance. More support is offered when a child is having difficulty with a particular task and, over time, less support is provided as the child makes gains on the task. Ideally, scaffolding works to maintain the child's potential level of development in the ZPD. An essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language. According to Vygotsky, language (and in particular, speech) is fundamental to children's cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intention so that behaviors can be better understood.^[32] Through the use of speech, children are able to communicate to and learn from others through dialogue, which is an important tool in the ZPD. In a dialogue, a child's unsystematic, disorganized, and spontaneous concepts are met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper.^[33] Empirical

research suggests that the benefits of scaffolding are not only useful during a task, but can extend beyond the immediate situation in order to influence future cognitive development. For instance, a recent study recorded verbal scaffolding between mothers and their 3- and 4-year-old children as they played together. Then, when the children were six years old, they underwent several measures of **executive function**, such as working memory and goal-directed play. The study found that the children's working memory and language skills at six years of age were related to the amount of verbal scaffolding provided by mothers at age three. In particular, scaffolding was most effective when mothers provided explicit conceptual links during play. Therefore, the results of this study not only suggest that verbal scaffolding aids children's cognitive development, but that the quality of the scaffolding is also important for learning and development.^[34]

Criticisms of North American "Vygotskian" legacy

A critique of the North American interpretation of Vygotsky's ideas and, somewhat later, its global spread and dissemination appeared in the 1980s.^[35] The early 1980s criticism of Russian and Western "Vygotskian" scholars^[36] continued throughout the 1990s. Thus, different authors emphasized the biased and fragmented interpretations of Vygotsky by representatives of what was termed "neo-Vygotskian fashions in contemporary psychology"^[37] or "selective traditions" in Vygotskian scholarship.^[38] Characteristically, the most fashionable "Vygotskian" phraseology in wide circulation in Western scholarly and educational discourse—such as the so-called "**zone of proximal development**"—in the critical literature of this period were referred to as "one of the most used and least understood constructs to appear in contemporary educational literature",^[39] the construct that was "used as little more than a fashionable alternative to Piagetian terminology or the concept of IQ for describing individual differences in attainment or potential".^[40] Other authors also suggest clearly distinguishing between original Vygotsky's notion of "zona blizhaishego razvitiia" (*ZBR*) and its later Western superficial interpretations known under the umbrella term "zone of proximal development" (*ZPD*).^[41] The criticism continued and reached a peak in the 2000s. Most often these critiques address numerous distortions of Vygotsky's ideas, mere "declarations of faith",^[42] "versions of Vygotsky",^[43] the "concepts and inferences curiously attributed to Lev Vygotsky",^[44] "multiple readings of Vygotsky",^[45] some of which—for instance, "activity theory"—are referred to as "dead end" for cultural-historical psychology^[29] and, moreover, for methodological thinking in cultural psychology.^[30] Some publications question "if anyone actually reads

Vygotsky's words",^[46] whether it is "too late to understand Vygotsky for the classroom",^[47] and suggest "turning Vygotsky on his head."^[48] Inconsistencies, contradictions, and at times fundamental flaws in "Vygotskian" literature were revealed in the ocean of critical publications on this subject and are typically associated with—but certainly not limited to—the North American legacy of Michael Cole and James Wertsch and their associates.^[49] These criticisms contributed significantly to the increasing awareness of numerous "challenges of claiming a Vygotskian perspective".^[50]

Revisionist movement in Vygotsky Studies

The revisionist movement in Vygotsky Studies was termed a "revisionist revolution"^[1] in order to describe a relatively recent trend that emerged in the 1990s. This trend is typically associated with growing dissatisfaction with the quality and scholarly integrity of available English translations of the texts of Vygotsky and members of [Vygotsky Circle](#) made from largely mistaken, distorted, and even in a few instances falsified Soviet editions,^{[51][52]} which raises serious concerns about the reliability of Vygotsky's texts available in English.^[53] However, unlike critical literature that discusses Western interpretations of Vygotsky's legacy, the target of criticism and the primary object of research in the studies of the revisionist strand are Vygotsky's texts proper: the manuscripts, original lifetime publications, and Vygotsky's posthumous Soviet editions that most often were subsequently uncritically translated into other languages. The revisionist strand is solidly grounded in a series of studies in Vygotsky's archives that uncovered the previously unknown and unpublished Vygotsky's materials.^{[11][54][55][56][57][58][59][60][61]}

Thus, some studies of the revisionist strand show that certain phrases, terms, and expressions typically associated with Vygotskian legacy as its core notions and concepts—such as "cultural-historical psychology", "cultural-historical theory", "cultural-historical school", "higher psychical/mental functions", "internalization", "zone of proximal development", etc., -- in fact, either occupy not more than just a few dozen pages within the six-volume collection of Vygotsky's works^{[62][63]} or even never occur in Vygotsky's own writings.^[64] Another series of studies revealed the questionable quality of Vygotsky's published texts that, in fact, were never finished and intended for publication by their author,^{[12][13][65]} but were nevertheless posthumously published without giving proper editorial acknowledgement of their unfinished, transitory nature^{[14][66]} and with numerous editorial interventions and distortions of Vygotsky's text.^{[67][68][69][70][71][72][73]} Another series of publications reveals that another well-known Vygotsky's text that is often presented as the

foundational work was back-translated into Russian from an English translation of a lost original and passed for the original Vygotsky's writing. This episode was referred to as "benign forgery".^{[74][75][76][77][78]}

Complete Works of L.S. Vygotsky

Scholars associated with the revisionist movement in Vygotsky Studies propose returning to Vygotsky's original uncensored works, critically revising the available discourse, and republishing them in both Russian and translation with a rigorous scholarly commentary.^{[53][79]} Therefore, an essential part of this revisionist strand is the ongoing work on "*PsyAnima Complete Vygotsky*" project^[80] that for the first time ever exposes full collections of Vygotsky's texts, uncensored and cleared from numerous mistakes, omissions, insertions, and blatant distortions and falsifications of the author's text made in Soviet editions and uncritically transferred in virtually all foreign translated editions of Vygotsky's works. This project is carried out by an international team of volunteers—researchers, archival workers, and library staff—from Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, and Switzerland, who joined their efforts and put together a collection of L.S. Vygotsky's texts. This publication work is supported by a stream of critical scholarly studies and publications on textology, history, theory and methodology of Vygotskian research that cumulatively contributes to the first ever edition of *The Complete Works of L.S. Vygotsky*.^[81]

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16. ^{a b} **Jump up to:** Kozulin, Alex. 1986. "Vygotsky in Context" in Vygotsky L. "Thought and Language", MIT Press. pp. xi - lvii
17. **Jump up** Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
18. **Jump up** Cf. self-criticism of 1929: "I am revising the s[econd] part of "monkey"[i.e., the book *Ape, primitive, and child*]. Alas! The f[irst] chapter is written wholly according to the Freudianists [...]; then the impenetrable Piaget is turned into an absolute beyond all measure; instrument and sign are mixed together even more, and so on and so forth . This is not the fault of A.R. [Luria] personally, but of the entire "epoch" of our thinking. We need to put a stop to this unrelentingly. [...] Let there be the most rigorous, monastic regime of thought; ideological seclusion, if necessary. And let us demand the same of others. Let us explain that studying cultural psychology is no joke, not something to do at odd moments or among other things, and not grounds for every new person's own conjectures". In: Vygotsky, L. S. (2007). *Letters to students and colleagues*. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 45(2), 11-60.[doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405450201](https://doi.org/10.2753/RPO1061-0405450201)
19. **Jump up** Cf. self-criticism of 1930: "In the process of development, and in the historical development in particular, it is not so much the functions which change (these we mistakenly studied before). Their structure and the system of their development remain the same. What is changed and modified are rather the relationships, the links between the functions. New constellations emerge which were unknown in the preceding stage". In: Vygotsky, L. S. (1930/1997). *On psychological*

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20. **Jump up**^ From the letter to A.R. Luria, from Moscow, June 12, 1931: "I am still beset with thousands of petty chores. The fruitlessness of what I do greatly distresses me. My scientific thinking is going off into the realm of fantasy, and I cannot think things through in a realistic way to the end. Nothing is going right: I am doing the wrong things, writing the wrong things, saying the wrong things. A fundamental reorganization is called for—and this time I am going to carry it out." In: Vygotsky, L. S. (2007). *Letters to students and colleagues. Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 45(2), 11-60. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405450201, p. 36
21. **Jump up**^ Vygotsky, archival document of mid-1932 titled "Consciousness without word": "**Our deficiency is not a deficiency of facts, but the untenability of the theory:** in the analysis of our crisis this is the main difficulty, but not a departure from facts. **This is contra A[.]N.[Leontiev.] Consequently:** salvation is not in the facts but in the theory. We introduced the systemic point of view **too late...Now** I understand all this more deeply" (Zavershneva, 2010b, p. 54)
22. **Jump up**^ Vygotsky in his presentation of December, 1932, a year and half before his death: "1. The necessity of a new stage of inquiry does not stem from the fact that a new thought has occurred to me or a new idea has caught my interest, but from the necessity of developing the research itself—new facts prod me into searching for new and more intricate explanations. The narrowness, bias, and schematism of the old mindset led us to the wrong assessment of the essential principles that we mistook for the secondary ones: interfunctional connections. We focused attention on the sign (on the tool) to the detriment of the operation with it, representing it as something simple, which goes through three phases: magical—external—internal. But the knot is external and the teenager's diary is external. Hence we have a sea of poorly explained facts and a desire to delve more deeply into the facts, i.e., to evaluate them theoretically in a different way. 2. The higher and lower functions are not constructed in two tiers: their number and names do not match. But our previous understanding was not right, either[, according to which] a higher function is the mastery of the lower ([e.g.,] voluntary attention is the subordination to it of involuntary attention) because this means exactly—in two tiers". Vygotsky's record

- titled "Symposium, December 4, 1932", see in Zavershneva, E. 2010b. The Vygotsky Family Archive: New Findings. Notebooks, Notes, and Scientific Journals of L.S. Vygotsky (1912–1934). *Journal of the Russian and East European Psychology* 48 (1):34-60, pp. 41-42
23. [Jump up to:^{a b c}](#) Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Chapter 6 Interaction between learning and development (79-91). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 24. [Jump up](#) Fraser, J. & Yasnitsky, A. (2015). *Deconstructing Vygotsky's Victimization Narrative: A Re-Examination of the "Stalinist Suppression" of Vygotskian Theory*. *History of the Human Sciences*, April 2015 28 (special issue on Vygotsky's legacy: "Vygotsky in His, Our and Future Times"): 128-153, doi:10.1177/0952695114560200
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 30. [Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Toomela, A. 2008. Activity theory is a dead end for methodological thinking in cultural psychology too. *Culture & Psychology* 14 (3):289-303
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 32. [Jump up](#) Vygotsky, L. (1934/1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
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35. **Jump up** Cf. Valsiner, J. (1988). *Developmental psychology in the Soviet Union*. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, p. 117: Present-day psychologists' interest in Vygotsky's thinking is indeed paradoxical. On the one hand, his writings seem increasingly popular among developmental psychologists in Europe and North America. On the other hand, however, careful analyses and thorough understanding of the background of Vygotsky's ideas is rare... Vygotsky seems to be increasingly well known in international psychology, while remaining little understood. The roots of his thinking in international philosophical and psychological discourse remain largely hidden. His ideas have rarely been developed further, along either theoretical or empirical lines.
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41. **Jump up** Valsiner, J., & Van der Veer, R. (1993). The encoding of distance: The concept of the zone of proximal development and its interpretations. In R. R. Cocking & K. A. Renninger (Eds.), *The development and meaning of psychological distance* (pp. 35-62). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
42. **Jump up** Cf. Valsiner, J., and R. Van der Veer (2000). *The social mind: Construction of the idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.4: It is often an open question as to what functions such declarations can have in science. From a position of in-depth analysis, such statements seem merely to be stating the obvious (compared with the statements

like the rain is wet or the rich are affluent). And yet, such general claims about the sociality of the human psyche are made with remarkable vigour and repetitiveness

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47. **Jump up**[^] Gredler, M.E. (2012). "Understanding Vygotsky for the classroom: Is it too late?". *Educational Psychology Review* 24 (1): 113–131. doi:10.1007/s10648-011-9183-6.
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