

Identifying elements of reality transformation: dialectical movement and development¹

Identificando elementos de transformação da realidade: movimento dialético e desenvolvimento

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RESUMO

O presente artigo tem por objetivo apresentar o conceito de *movimento* e alguns de seus impactos para a psicologia histórico-cultural por meio do levantamento de pesquisas acadêmicas brasileiras que adotam o termo com centralidade. As pesquisas elencadas se vinculam de alguma forma à dialética e não apresentam definição do termo. Em levantamento bibliográfico foi possível compreender que o cerne da dialética que confere movimento à realidade é a contradição. Na psicologia histórico-cultural de Vigotski, o desenvolvimento é um processo de formação do ser humano caracterizado pelo surgimento de novas qualidades humanas específicas em cada etapa, o que caracteriza o movimento humano, que é externamente determinado e também é automovimento. Configurou-se uma definição possível de movimento relacionada ao processo materialista dialético de transitoriedade qualitativa permeado por contradição, o que pode ser notado no processo de desenvolvimento conforme compreendido por Vigotski, torna-se mais viável analisar se há sua ocorrência nos diferentes contextos e a identificação de processos que constituam, de fato, potenciais

ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the concept of movement and some of its impacts on historical-cultural psychology through a literature review of Brazilian academic research that adopts the term centrally. The studies listed are linked in some way to dialectics and do not provide a definition of the term. Through the bibliographic review, it was possible to understand that the core of the dialectic that gives movement to reality is contradiction. In Vygotsky's historical-cultural psychology, development is a process of human formation characterized by the emergence of new specific human qualities at each stage, which defines human movement, both externally determined and also self-directed. A possible definition of movement was established in relation to the dialectical materialist process of qualitative transience permeated by contradiction. This can be observed in the development process as understood by Vygotsky. It then becomes more feasible to analyze whether it occurs in different contexts and to identify processes that may, in fact, represent potential revolutions, such as development at the ontogenetic level and in contrast to

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revoluções, a exemplo do desenvolvimento em nível de ontogênese e em contraponto com situações de estagnação ou mesmo de pretensas e aparentes mudanças.

Palavras-chave: Movimento. Dialética. Desenvolvimento.

situations of stagnation or even apparent and alleged changes.

Keywords: Movement. Development. Dialectics.

1 Introduction

In order to contribute to a debate encompassing the transience and transformation of individuals and society, this article brings an excerpt that aims to present the concept of *movement* and some of its impacts on historical-cultural psychology⁴ through a survey of the state of the art in Brazilian academic researches that centrally adopts the term. This psychological approach was developed in Brazil starting in the 1970s, following what Cordeiro and Spink (2018) call as a "crisis of reference" in psychology, manifested in critiques of North American models endorsed by various approaches in social psychology and sociology across different countries. A feeling of dissatisfaction grew with the available social psychology proposals of the time, alongside a desire for a psychological framework enabling transformative approaches (Lane, 1988; Lane & Codo, 1984; Yamamoto, 2007; Smolka, 2021).

In 1979, the translation of a text by Luria, titled *Curso de Psicologia Geral* [General Psychology Course], from Russian to Brazilian Portuguese was published. Works by Leontiev, such as *Desenvolvimento do Psiquismo* [Development of the Psyche] translated into European Portuguese and *Atividade, consciência e personalidade* [Activity, Consciousness, and Personality], translated into Argentine Spanish also emerged in 1978 (Smolka, 2021). Opposing dominant perspectives that advocated interventions for individual well-being within social psychology, Silvia Lane, a professor trained in philosophy and the first director of the Psychology

⁴ The designation of this Soviet Marxist psychology as historical-cultural psychology will be adopted in this article, considering the various nomenclatures used in Brazil, as the aim is neither to problematize nor endorse them.

Program at PUC-SP (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo), is considered a pioneer in Brazil in adopting Marxist-based research to construct a critically grounded social psychology (Bock et al., 2007).

The first textual productions that explicitly adopt this stance by this researcher are the booklet titled *O que é psicologia social?* [What is Social Psychology?] (Lane, 2006), which is part of the Primeiros Passos collection, released in 1981; and *Psicologia Social: o homem em movimento* [Social Psychology: The Human in Movement] (from 1984), which is a compilation of fourteen texts organized with Wanderley Codo. The first text, by Silvia Lane, is an introduction titled *A Psicologia Social e uma nova concepção do homem para a Psicologia* [Social Psychology and a New Conception of Humanity for Psychology], which historicizes social psychology, a framework through which she presents hegemonic social psychology and contrasts it with perspectives of historical-dialectical materialism.

It is noteworthy that the term *movement* was already used in the earliest Brazilian publications based on Soviet and Marxist psychology and is commonly employed to denote transience — or its possibility — among individuals, groups, or even societal sectors. This meaning holds special relevance given the theoretical and epistemic narrative guided by active agency and the pursuit of human emancipation.

2. Movement in Academic Psychology Productions

Characteristics of scientific research in psychology addressing the concept were investigated through access to the theses and dissertations catalog of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) [Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel]— created in 2002 and providing access to over 1.5 million works⁵ defended since 1987 — using the specific descriptor *movimento* [movement]. The search yielded 1,194 results⁶, comprising 322 theses and 872

⁵ As of June 5, 2024, the website listed one million, five hundred and eighty-four thousand and fourteen theses and dissertations (1.584.014).

⁶ The following filters were selected: “Áreas do conhecimento” (Knowledge Areas) (with the number of works per area in parentheses): Psycholinguística (1); Psycholinguística (2); Psicologia (129); Psicologia (962); Psicologia Cognitiva (Cognitive Psychology) (1); Psicologia Do

dissertations defended between 1987 and 2021⁷. Some abstracts were unavailable for works predating the Plataforma Sucupira [Sucupira Platform]; in such cases, the abstracts were searched on the websites of the affiliated educational institutions or, as a last resort, in journal articles or conference proceedings with the same title and author(s).

Based on the Integrative Literature Review, a procedure that allows, through prior research, drawing general conclusions from a body of literature on a specific topic (Beyea & Nicoll, 1998), we selected theses and dissertations that included the descriptor in their abstracts and/or titles, considering the stated objectives. Works using the term in the context of physical/physiological movement, social organizations, or displacement (e.g., film = images in movement) were discarded. Thus, the refinement prioritized sources directly developing the concept of movement in the sense of transition, change, or transformation. It is not assumed that the discarded research could not contribute to understanding the subject; however, the choice was made in line with the aims established for this work to prioritize the centrality of the concept's treatment.

The primary purpose of this configured survey was to identify the academic use of the specific term movement in a highlighted manner — that is, instances where the term carried academic weight, centrality, or importance sufficient to appear in the research title or abstract. From this data, we monitored information regarding the adoption of the signifier within psychology. With the research refined under these conditions, 11 academic works in psychology were identified, as listed below:

Desenvolvimento Humano (Developmental Psychology) (2); Psicologia Do Ensino E Da Aprendizagem (Psychology of Teaching and Learning) (1); Psicologia Do Ensino E Da Aprendizagem (Psychology of Teaching and Learning) (10); Psicologia Do Trabalho E Organizacional (Work and Organizational Psychology) (1); Psicologia Experimental (Experimental Psychology) (2); Psicologia Experimental (Experimental Psychology) (7); Psicologia Social (Social Psychology) (21); Psicologia Social (Social Psychology) (5).

⁷ It should be noted that no time period was delimited for the research; the interval reported corresponds to the studies found.

Table 1 – Academic productions on movement in psychology.

ID	Year	Univ.	Degree	Supervisor / Professor	Author	Title/ Website	Theory / Excerpt / Perspective
1	1998	PUC-SP	M	Silvia Tatiana Maurer Lane	José Carlos Duarte	Movimento da consciência de um trabalhador com L.E.R.: um estudo de caso (https://sapientia.pucsp.br/handle/handle/17285)	Cultural-historical psychology/ “the life change process triggered by the onset of illness”.
2	2002	PUC-SP	D	Gilberto Safra	Haydée Christinne e Kahtuni	Uma analista em movimento: momentos transformadores e formativos (https://buscaintergrada.pucsp.br/vufind/Record/150610/Description#tabnav)	psychoanalysis/ “transformative and constitutive moments of the author’s identity and positioning as an analyst”
3	2003	UFSC	M	Andréa Vieira Zanella	Daiani Barboza	O movimento de potência e/ou impotência de ação dos catadores de material reciclável de Criciúma/SC no que se refere à construção da sua cidadania (https://www.fe.unicamp.br/pf-fe/publicacao/2430/53-artigos-barbosad_etal.pdf)	historical-cultural/ “...the [management] choices to be made would imply significant changes in their dreams of potentializing the cooperative enterprise or in the continuity of already outlined paths, but also pure becoming”
4	2003	USP	D	Maria Clotilde Therezinha Rossetti Ferreira	Ana Paula Soares da Silva	Continuidade e descontinuidade de si na narrativa de homens que tiveram envolvimento com o crime (https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/59/59137/tde-09062009-154727/es.php)	Self-theory/ “...it is argued that continuities and discontinuities occur in a figure-ground movement of positionings mediated by social and cultural relations...”

5	2005	Univ. São Marcos (SP)	M	Antonio da Costa Ciampa	Katia Monteiro de Benedetto Pacheco	O processo de metamorfose da identidade do paciente amputado (https://www.revistas.usp.br/actafrasiatrica/article/view/102746)	historical-cultural/ “process of identity metamorphosis in individuals with amputation”
6	2008	PUC-SP	D	Silvia Tatiana Maurer Lane	Adjuto de Eudes Fabri	Categorias que constituem a compreensão do humano e os enlaces entre consciência, subjetividade e significação na abordagem vigotskiana (https://ariel.pucs.p.br/handle/handle/17250)	historical-cultural/ “...to conceive word and consciousness not as isolated or abstract structures, but as historical, concrete, and constitutive movement.”
7	2010	UFSC	D	Mara Coelho de Souza Lago	Mário Ferreira Resende	Itinerários de si: entre a permanência e a mudança (https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/94324)	Deleuzian/ “...the gesture that propels us into the movement of change gains potency when what remains coincides with what is sufficient to continue.”
8	2010	USP Ribeirão Preto	M	Lucília Maria Sousa Romão	Ludmila Ferrarezi	A biblioteca escolar nas teias do discurso eletrônico (https://www.teses.usp.br/teses/desponiveis/59/59137/tde-12112013-163230/pt-br.php)	psychoanalysis/ “...the way it is structured and (re)constructed through the movement of subjects and meanings that constitute themselves simultaneously.”
9	2011	UFU	M	Maria Lucia Castilho Romera	Aline Miranda Schwartz de Araújo	Oficinas Itinerantes: Uma Idéia, Um Obstáculo, Um Movimento Constituinte De Subjetividades (http://www.pgpsi.ufu.br/node/125)	psychoanalysis/ “Milton Santos, who states: ‘everything is subject to the law of movement and renewal, even the sciences. The new is not invented; it is discovered”

10	2011	USP Ribeirão Preto	M	Lucília Maria Sousa Romão	Daniela Giorgenon	Sentidos de inclusão e exclusão na voz de sujeitos escolares: o deslocamento do déficit pela via da falta (https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/59/59137/tde-21102013-164115/pt-br.php)	psychoanalysis/ "...grouped into four discursive entries addressing the discursive formation of 'lack' interpreted through the lens of 'flaw,' sometimes as provoking stagnation and other times as provoking movements for its containment."
11	2017	USP	M	Gustavo Martineli Massola	Alan Rizerio da Silva Oliveira	Estudantes em movimento: Caminho e perspectivas de dois militantes estudantis do IP da USP em busca de transformação individual e social (https://sucupira.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.jsf?popup=true&id_trabalho=5045299)	historical-cultural; among others/ "...the identity transformations of interviewees along their journey and the transformations achieved in the collective space."

Source: author's elaboration.

As per the described procedures, these academic works were selected for addressing the concept of movement by indicating qualitative changes or transiences (rather than displacement) with thematic centrality. It is possible to observe that workers (ID 1), analysts (ID 2), recyclable material collectors (ID 3), men involved with crime (ID 4), amputees (ID 5), individuals labeled as "mad" (ID 9), members of a virtual community (ID 7), student activists (ID 11), school subjects across diverse specificities (IDs 8, 10), and human subjectivity (ID 6) are all permeated by realities unveiled through the clash between their research conceptions/definitions and their social classes, needs, historical moments, and personal histories.

Among all listed works, the most recent is from 2017 and the oldest to 1998 (Table 01), totaling nearly twenty years of productions in the database addressing movement in the scrutinized sense. Regarding other characteristics of the studies listed in Table 1, it is notable that the majority were published/defended after 2000. In terms of universities, there was a predominance of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP) (3 studies), followed by the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) (São Paulo and Ribeirão Preto campuses), and the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) (2 studies each). The dissertation under ID 5 was supervised by Ciampa, also affiliated with PUC-SP.

Within the three productions initially identified outside São Paulo's academic circuit, the ID 3 is linked to UFSC, but its supervisor/professor, Andréa Vieira Zanella, was trained at PUC-SP. The ID 7, also from UFSC, had its supervisor/professor, Mara Lago, complete her doctoral studies at Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp); and the ID 9 is from the Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU), though its supervisor/professor, Maria Lucia Romera, earned her doctorate at USP and conducted postdoctoral research at PUC-SP. In this context, it is known that Brazilian university expansion became more effectively consolidated starting in 2007 with the advent of the Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais (REUNI) [Support Program for the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities]. Even so, nearly half (49%) of the country's higher education institutions remain concentrated in the southeast region (Costa, 2015), favoring the training of psychology doctoral candidates in this state. Let us examine Table 2, which compiles academic information about the supervisors of the related studies (listed in Table 1) gathered from their Lattes CVs.

Table 2 – Information about supervisors.

ID	Supervisor	Supervisor's / Professor's Supervisor	Institution	Knowledg e Area	Theme/ Theory	Affiliation/ Employment	Obs.
1	Silvia Tatiana Maurer Lane	Aniela Ginsberg	PUC-SP	Psychology	Language; Grupos Socio-Culturais	PUC-SP	
2	Gilberto Safra	Ryad Simon	USP-SP	Clinical psychology	Psychoanalisy s	USP-SP e PUC-SP	
3	Andréa Vieira Zanella	Claudia Davis	PUC-SP	Social psychology	Activity from a historical-cultural perspective	UFSC	
4	Maria Clotilde Therezinha Rossetti Ferreira	Brian Foss and James Douglas	University of London	Developmental Psychology.	Mother-child relationship	USP-RP	
5	Antonio da Costa Ciampa	Silvia Tatiana Maurer Lane	PUC-SP	Social Psychology	Identity; Metamorphosi s	PUC-SP	
6	Silvia Tatiana Maurer Lane	Aniela Ginsberg	PUC-SP	Psychology	Language; Socio-Cultural Groups	PUC-SP	
7	Mara Coelho de Souza Lago	Angel Pino Sirgado	Unicamp	Education	Identity Deleuze	UFSC	
8	Lucília Maria Sousa Romão	Leda Verdiani Tfouni	USP-RP	Linguistics , Language, and Art	Discourse Analisys; Psychoanalysi s	USP-RP	
9	Maria Lucia Castilho Romera	Antônio Paschoal Agatti	USP-SP	School and Development Psychology	Psychoanalysi s	UFU	Postdoctoral research PUC-SP
10	Lucília Maria Sousa Romão	Leda Verdiani Tfouni	USP-RP	Linguistics , Language, and Art	Discourse Analisys; Psychoanalysi s	USP-RP	
11	Gustavo Martineli Massola	Eda Terezinha de O. Tassara	USP-SP	Social Psychology	Social control; Social psychology; Public policies; Institutions	USP-SP	

Source: author's elaboration (2024).

The two studies linked to USP Ribeirão Preto (IDs 8 and 10) shared the same supervisor, Lucília Romão, which is coordinator of the Research Group

“Discurso e memória: movimentos do sujeito” [“Discourse and Memory: Movements of the Subject”], a proponent of psychoanalytic theory who works with Discourse Analysis. Additionally, two of the four studies affiliated with PUC-SP were advised by Silvia Lane, as mentioned earlier, one of the pioneers in studying historical-cultural psychology in Brazil. In this regard, the theory that underpinned the largest number of academic works addressing movement in the circumscribed sense of this research was historical-cultural theory, present in 5 out of 11 studies, followed by psychoanalysis (4), Self theory (1), and Deleuzian-based theory (1).

Initially, it was hypothesized that the term might be used indiscriminately, without theoretical relation. However, this was not confirmed, as the listed studies are generally linked to dialectics — whether through historical materialism or the critique of Hegelian dialectics incorporated by Deleuze, a philosopher who, according to Bueno (2017), develops in his work an “anti-dialectical ontology of becoming”. Nevertheless, the analysis of abstracts confirmed the hypothesis that the term is not defined in the listed studies, but is merely adopted as a synonym for change and/or transformation.

The correlation of the term movement in its dialectical sense is particularly observable in studies with IDs 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Of these, three were developed by graduate students at PUC-SP, a university that also housed faculty members who studied Soviet psychology — or at least what was accessible in Brazil during the 1970s-80s — and who can be identified as precursors of historical-cultural psychology in the country. These scholars organized and published the book *Psicologia Social - O homem em movimento* [Social Psychology: The Human in Movement], to which Silvia Lane contributed texts and co-edited. Among PUC-SP's supervisors/professors, Silvia Lane also mentored Antonio Ciampa. Gilberto Safra, in turn, is affiliated with clinical psychology and psychoanalysis.

Thus, it is evident that São Paulo appears to be the stronghold of movement⁸ in psychology, notably at PUC-SP in the state capital. Permeated by Marxist-based psychology — contemporarily termed historical-cultural — it challenged prevailing notions with the idea, still innovative to some even nowadays, of the possibility of altering everything that exists as it exists. That is, the potential for movement according to concrete and material possibilities, or the movement of humans, society, and culture in dialectical relation to their processes and products.

This survey of research allowed the identification of elements supporting the existence of a correlation between the term movement and dialectics, as well as a connection to Brazilian historical-cultural psychology — a legacy of Soviet psychology — alongside the absence of a conceptual definition, limited instead to its use as a synonym for changes and transformations.

When focusing on the concept of movement through the lens of historical-cultural psychology, it is necessary to consider the theoretical-methodological foundations that permeate the term and enabled its existence within this psychological framework. In other words, to understand this concept, it conveys revisit the thinkers and ideas that contributed to its adopted conceptions.

Historical-cultural psychology is rooted in materialist dialectics as conceived by Marxian philosophy over two millennia after the initial development of dialectical thought, attributed to the pre-Socratics. This specific dialectic enables the understanding of humans as both products and producers of themselves and their environment. However, long before, this concept in its more generic conception — equated to the “art of dialogue” — was disseminated (Schopenhauer, 2003; Konder, 2008).

⁸ It is crucial to reaffirm the historical context in which nearly half of Brazil's higher education institutions are concentrated in the southeast region (Costa, 2015). This context characterizes São Paulo as a major academic hub in Brazil, particularly for psychology, having hosted the country's first university and the earliest mandatory psychology courses, thus maintaining a tradition in teaching and research in the field (Lisboa & Barbosa, 2009).

3. A Concept Related to Dialectics

Dialectics represents a broad diversity of concepts, varying across thinkers, approaches, and historical-epistemic frameworks. Generically, based on the etymological origin of the Greek word *dialektike*, it would mean the art of discussion or dialogue (Russ, 1994; Zen & Sgarbi, 2018).

Kant was one of the first modern philosophers to reclaim dialectics with a more defined focus, assigning it the role of establishing the “equilibrium” of reason. For this author, reason tends to transcend the phenomenal realm — the only knowable instance — and his proposal of transcendental dialectics acts on the “conflicts of reason,” granting them, if not knowability, at least thinkability. Transcendental dialectics is, for Kant, a second moment of transcendental logic, the first being understanding [*Verstand*], characterized by the categorizing and delimiting approach to the object.

In Hegel’s view, dialectics consists of a phenomenon of existence — of how nature manifests and moves, for example. The thinker describes it as a formal moment of logic, the second moment or moment of rational negation, which occurs after the initial contact with the object. This contact enables understanding (*Verstand*), that is, the initial apprehension, categorization, and delimitation of the object. It is notable that, as postulated by Kant, Hegelian knowledge is also permeated by the identification of the object through its delimitation. However, for Hegel, this process is imbued with dialectics, whereas for Kant, dialectics acted as a kind of “mediator” of reason’s knowability.

For Hegel, in the dialectical moment, the object is negated in its contradictory. It should be noted that contradiction does not imply mere contrariety or simple opposition, which are mutually exclusive elements. It is this moment that enables movement in the object, as by grappling with negation — or what is not — the object is confronted with its possibilities of transformation, its coming-into-being.

Yet thought does not conclude in its negative; instead, it returns to the positive, an affirmation. This is the speculative moment, a term that connotes mirroring (not speculating, investigating, or conjecturing), as the object reflects

upon itself, as in a mirroring process, and assumes an affirmation based on a return-to-self. Upon constituting itself as a defined, delimited affirmation, it reconfigures as understanding. The first formal, procedural moment of logic is resumed, but this return does not occur in terms of content. It is observed that before being theorized, dialectical processes already existed, having been identified and defined as the logic of knowledge in the 19th century by Hegel (1995), for whom dialectical logic incorporated contradiction as a category of thought (Saviani, 2015).

4. The Materialist Dialectic

The study of Hegelian logic became of interest to Marx while he was developing the foundations of his critique of political economy, as notably expressed in the *Grundrisse* (dated to the late 1850s) through categorical analyses, and in the Postface to the Second Edition of *Capital* (1872). The latter work contains the most direct references to his own understanding of dialectics, often in contrast to Hegel's. It is here that Marx asserts that his dialectical method is not merely different from Hegel's but its "opposite," as he considers that "the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected and translated in the human mind" (Marx, 2013, p. 78).

What might be simplistically termed the materialist demonstration of Marx's reading of dialectics can be better understood through another statement in the same work (Marx, 2013), where he notes that Hegel's dialectic is conceived "upside down" (as per the translation defended by Fulda, 2017⁹) and that it must be "inverted" to access the "rational core" of Hegelian theory.

Hegel's dialectic is configured as a part representing negation — the counterposition of a unity — resulting in another conceptual unity, a process unfolding in the realm of ideas. Marx, however, argues that this is a mystified view, asserting that dialectics is, in itself, the entire process that begins with apparent unities, unveiling their constituent, intertwined contradictions through

⁹ According to Grespan (2017, p. 107), "the verb used by Marx is *umstülpen*, which means to invert but also to turn inside out—as when removing a glove, it is turned inside out."

the ideal, reflective representation of these material unities. Thus, Marx “inverts” Hegelian dialectics (Fulda, 2017).

This shift in the conception of dialectics, which Marx (2013) calls a rational “configuration” (p. 79), enables the simultaneous comprehension of negation and the affirmation of what exists, thereby making conceivable the perishing of forms. In this way, it “grasps every developed form in the flow of movement, thus also including its transient aspect” (Marx, 2013, p. 79).

With these premises, Marxian dialectics allows for the understanding of reality as the dialectical unity of phenomenon and essence (Kosíc, 1969). It permits apprehending the empirical and transcending it through a process leading to critical analyses of reality, imbued with transience, since it conceives concreteness as a linear unity formed by apparent static concepts (or, in Kosíc’s terms, *pseudoconcreticidade* [pseudoconcreteness]), permeated by contradiction. What Hegel conceived as a purely ideal, logical-processual moment—the suspension of contradictions leading to the elevation of an affirmative identity—is reinterpreted by Marx through materialist dialectics as the totality of a knowledge process via the unveiling of reality.

The consequences of this inversion manifest in the critique of bourgeois society. For Hegel, social and economic differences constitute appearances subsumed under an ideal, identity-based dialectical foundation that equalizes all according to the principle of equality. For Marx, equality is the apparent bourgeois principle under which contradictory reality is unveiled (Grespan, 2017). Thus, Marx captured the dialectical movement of capital in such a way that his dialectics can be applied to understanding objects within this productive system.

Despite Fulda’s (2017) reference to Marx’s letter of May 9, 1868, in which he allegedly stated, “When I’ve shaken off the economic burden, I shall write a ‘Dialectics’”—a project never realized—it can be affirmed that in his completed works, Marx was not deliberately focused on a philosophical project prescribing “lenses” for reading reality. Instead, he sought to strip reality bare, revealing his method as he applied it to achieve his central objective. To grasp Marx’s view of

dialectics, Fulda (2017) emphasizes studying works like *O Capital* (Capital), *Grundrisse*, and his 1840s letters critiquing Hegelian dialectics, alongside Marx's explicit declarations on the subject.

The importance of dialectics for Marx—who recast it inversely, focusing on contradictions, reality, and movement—is inherent and explicit in its use as a heuristic category for his critique of political economy. This emphasis is echoed by Lenin (2011), who observes that while Marx never wrote a treatise on dialectical logic, he left the logic of *O Capital* (Capital), where it is scientifically applied, unifying logic, dialectics, and the theory of knowledge.

The core of dialectics that grants movement to reality is contradiction. All movement, even physical, occurs through the contradictory. A person or vehicle moves only due to friction: a force that, on one hand, resists motion (a body tends toward inertia) and, on the other, enables traction, propelling it forward (Silveira, 2011). The force of contraries permits mobility, and phenomena manifest dialectics as the “expression of reality’s own movement” (Saviani, 2015, p. 27). As Kosíc (1969) states, “A totality without contradictions is empty and inert” (p. 51).

In Marx, dialectics can be read in the mode of exposition and comprehension of the core categories of his critique of political economy. It is foundational to Marxist theory, permeating its core rather than being a mere conceptual moment. Saviani (2015) clarifies that dialectical logic consists of the process of constructing the concrete in thought, which cannot occur without the mediation of the abstract:

The construction of thought proceeds as follows: it starts from the empirical, passes through the abstract, and arrives at the concrete. In other words, the passage from the empirical to the concrete occurs through the mediation of the abstract (Saviani, 2015, p. 27).

He explains that both the starting and ending points of the dialectical thought process are the concrete. However, the concrete that initiates the process is the real concrete, while the post-abstraction concrete is the

thought concrete. The concrete differs from the empirical, as the latter designates what is objective, while the former is complex and multidetermined. Thus, dialectics as a method contributes to dismantling the apparent independence of pseudoconcrete configurations and objects, cleaving the apparent unity between phenomenon—what manifests directly—and essence, which does not (Kosíc, 1969).

This mode of comprehending reality, termed historical-dialectical materialism, underpins a psychological framework known as historical-cultural psychology, advanced by the Soviet scholar Lev Vygotsky.

5. Movement in Psychology

Vygotsky was defined as a committed Marxist after the publication and analysis of his personal notes (Kravtsov, 2014; Prestes & Tunes, 2022). In one excerpt, he expressed his desire to fully grasp Marx's method rather than merely assembling citations to support a concept of psyche (Vygotsky in Zavershneva & Van Der Veer [Eds.], 2018).

This observation underscores Vygotsky's commitment to psychology and Marxism at its core, historically reclaiming and reinventing this science both methodologically and epistemically. Thus, understanding Marxian theory is indispensable for grasping his psychological propositions, as psychology is not merely "coordinated" with Marxism but deeply integrated (Vygotsky, 1999b, p. 415).

But what were the characteristics of psychology under Vygotsky's proposal? In *O significado histórico da crise da psicologia* [The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology] (Vygotsky, 1999b), he outlines his perspective by reclaiming and problematizing psychology's development, proposing a reinterpretation grounded in Marxist foundations. Historically reviewing the diverse conceptions of psychology prevalent in 1927, he surveyed their limitations and contributions through historical-dialectical materialism, aiming to surpass existing frameworks and consolidate his own psychological conception. He sought to differentiate and unify past psychological work "on a

new basis with all that has been scientifically studied by psychology,” a science that “does not yet exist and must be created, not by a single school” (Vygotsky, 1999b, p. 417). For him, psychology constitutes the science of the “new man” in the future society, without which “the Marxist perspective and the science of history would be incomplete” (Vygotsky, 1999b, p. 417).

Kravtsov (2014) noted that, for Vygotsky, development is considered an internally determined movement — a historicist reading via the genetic-experimental method, whose bases are the social situation of development coupled with central neoformation. In Vygotsky’s notes compiled under the chapter *Psychology as a Science* in the anthology *Vygotsky’s Notebooks: A Selection* (In Zavershneva & Van Der Veer, 2018), evidence supporting this assertion can be found.

For Vygotsky, development is a process of human formation characterized by the emergence of new, specifically human qualities at each stage, made possible only by the previously developed framework. That is, the emergence of new qualities is historically prepared by preceding ones. Development characterizes human movement, which is externally determined through the subject’s interaction with sociocultural and historical determinations, while also being self-movement — internally determined, as the already-formed thought structure actively participates in development (Vygotsky, 2018).

In this sense, Kravtsov (2014) categorically states that for Vygotsky, “development is always self-development...”, since “self-development is an internally determined movement” (p. 35). This conception is associated with Spinoza and, as seen in excerpts from Psychology as a Science (Vygotsky in Zavershneva & Van Der Veer [Eds.], 2018), it is crucial to note that this movement is not determined exclusively by internal schemas. However, for decades, Soviet researchers interpreted it as predominantly or exclusively external.

The concept of the zone of proximal development, trivialized especially in education, did not hold central importance in much of Vygotsky’s work and was fragmentarily appropriated, disseminated under productivist proposals to designate a set of thoughts a child has not yet developed but could develop in a

given moment and context. Chaiklin (2011) emphasizes the need to reposition this concept within its proper place in Vygotsky's developmental theory, neither overemphasizing nor underemphasizing it. It should be understood as highlighting the importance of imminent, potential development, alongside the objective and subjective apparatuses of the human being.

Coupled with this, *perezhivanie* (lived experience) plays a decisive role by representing the relationship between environment and personality, constituting an analytical unit between these instances. In Vygotsky's approach, *perezhivanie* is, so to speak, a significant developmental experience — one that implies the subject's movement. Through *perezhivanie*, the subject transforms to the point of altering their sense of context (Vygotsky, 2018). It is a processual and dialectical unit of analysis that overcomes the individual-society dichotomy and the determinism often ascribed to social influence, even in socio-historical-cultural psychology (Fleer et al., 2017; Meshcheryakov, 2010; Veiga, 2024).

Development can only be understood as self-movement when considering, in its procedural complexity, the formation of specifically human characteristics that constitute a subject. This is only possible through *perezhivanie*, aligned with potentials (the zone of proximal development), which relates to and is conditioned by the substrate or framework previously constituted in the subject's developmental history. Thus, it is a *non-self-centered self-movement*: while it is the subject's own movement, it cannot be characterized as centered on the subject or dependent solely on them.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that this movement is externally determined and, from the perspective of Marxist dialectics, even though the analysis focuses on the subject (psychology's object of study), this externally determined self-movement impacts supra-individual reality, altering the environment in some capacity.

The concept of *perezhivanie* was addressed by Vygotsky late in his life and career in his work *Psicologia da Arte* [Psychology of Art]. Given that *perezhivanie* itself acts as an engine for movement, it is unsurprising that art — characterized as “intentional human action that recreates material reality and transforms the subject” and crafted to manifest and objectify feelings and other “typically human

mental capacities" (Barroco & Superti, 2014) — is also linked to movement. Art serves as an instrument, product, and potential producer of *perezhivanie*.

Considering the individual genesis of movement as a dynamic of transience involving applied creation or an applied creative act, it is possible to liken individual manifestations of movement to art. However, it is critical to clarify the limits of this analogy: art aims at symbolic-aesthetic and representational transcendence of reality — it is not directly concrete (Vygotsky, 1999a). Movement, in contrast, pertains to a process of reality's transience.

In summary, human development is a complex process encompassing nuances, among which the importance of pre-established levels or schemas — designated as the consideration of individual developmental historicity (ontogeny) — stands out. The zone of proximal development allows for contemplating imminent or potential development. Additionally, the definition of *perezhivanie* must be considered to overcome mechanistic readings of "incorporating" the environment into the subject. Artistic expression, or what Vygotsky terms the artistic act, can be seen as both an instrument for *perezhivanie* and a product of humans shaped by *perezhivanie* in their development. It also produces *perezhivanie* in both creators and audiences. Within Vygotsky's concepts of development and *perezhivanie*, we identify contributions guiding the understanding of movement in historical-cultural psychology.

6. Final Considerations

The initial hypothesis that the academic use of the term movement in psychology research might occur indiscriminately, without theoretical coherence, was not confirmed. Instead, the listed studies are generally linked to dialectics, particularly historical materialism. However, the analysis of abstracts confirmed the hypothesis that the term is not defined in these works, being merely adopted as a synonym for dynamism and change.

The occurrence of movement in theoretically dialectical research became clearer upon retracing the historical evolution of this category up to Marxian materialist proposals. It was observed that the movement in question references the dialectical process concerning contradiction, as mobility arises from the force

of contraries. It proved acceptable to understand movement, through Marx's materialist framework, as qualitative transience imbued with dialectical contradiction. In historical-cultural psychology, permeated by this conception, movement manifests, for example, in human development.

In Vygotsky's psychology, his notebook entries highlight the identification of contradiction as the source or driving force of development, enabling self-movement in the development of higher psychological functions — conclusions he reached through reading Lenin and his considerations on Hegel (Vygotsky In Zavershneva & Van Der Veer [Eds.], 2018).

Materialist dialectics-oriented movement has concrete contingencies. As outlined by Vygotsky's Marxist psychology, humans possess developmental potentials enabling them to transcend what is given. Yet this transcendence does not overstep the tenuous limit of breaking from material, sociocultural, and historical determinants. It is as if we are characters in a book, constituted not only by already written lines but also by those yet to come — though future lines are guided by existing ones. The character may shift directions, sensations, or notions, yet remains in accordance with the established narrative. Building on these reflective premises, further exploration is warranted into how humans might move toward freedom, in the Vygotskian and Engelsian sense of mastering determinants (Vygotsky, 2021), and how they might transform their realities.

By outlining a possible definition of movement related to the dialectical materialist process of qualitative transience permeated by contradiction — observable in the developmental process as understood by Vygotsky — it becomes more feasible to analyze its occurrence across different contexts, counterposed to stagnation or even alleged and apparent sociocultural changes. Examples include artistic manifestations, (academic or political) debates, news dissemination, and professional practices. The insights provided by the studies presented here can contribute both to more precise use of the term and to identifying processes that constitute, in fact, potential revolutions, such as development at the ontogenetic level.

Identificando elementos de transformación de la realidad: movimiento dialéctico y desarrollo

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar el concepto de movimiento y algunos de sus impactos en la psicología histórico-cultural a través de un recorrido por la investigación académica brasileña que adopta el término de manera central. Las investigaciones enumeradas están vinculadas de alguna manera a la dialéctica y no presentan una definición del término. En un relevamiento bibliográfico se pudo comprender que el núcleo de la dialéctica que da movimiento a la realidad es la contradicción. En la psicología histórico-cultural de Vygotsky, el desarrollo es un proceso de formación del ser humano caracterizado por el surgimiento de nuevas cualidades humanas específicas en cada etapa, lo que caracteriza el movimiento humano, el cual está determinado externamente y es también automovimiento. Al configurar una posible definición de movimiento relacionada con el proceso materialista dialéctico de fugacidad cualitativa permeada por la contradicción, que puede notarse en el proceso de desarrollo tal como lo entiende Vygotsky, se vuelve más viable analizar si ocurre en diferentes contextos e identificar procesos que constituyen, de hecho, revoluciones potenciales, como el desarrollo en el nivel de la ontogénesis y en contraposición a situaciones de estancamiento o incluso cambios supuestos y aparentes.

Palabras clave: Movimiento. Dialéctica. Desarrollo.

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Received in November 2024.

Approved in March 2025.