

Personality according to Vigotski: from the reaction system to the social drama¹

A personalidade segundo Vigotski:
do sistema de reações ao drama social

Personalidad según Vigotski:
del sistema reactivo al drama social

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ABSTRACT

Even though Vigotski did not construct a theory of personality, he developed important reflections on the nature and formation of this category throughout his work, as well as its relationship with education. Thus, we sought to understand how Vigotski conceptualizes personality throughout the theoretical continuities and discontinuities of his work. To this end, theoretical research was carried out based on Vigotski's texts, written between 1924 and 1931, duly contextualized within the entirety of his work. In this context, Vigotski understands personality in three different ways: 1) as a system of reactions; 2) as a superior system of mediated reactions; and 3) as a social drama. Therefore, in addition to highlighting the scientific, political and educational importance of personality studies, Vigotski also makes important reflections on its formation.

Keywords: Personality Development; Vigotski; Cultural-Historical Psychology; Drama.

RESUMO

Ainda que não tenha construído uma teoria da personalidade, Vigotski tece importantes reflexões acerca da natureza e formação desta categoria ao longo de sua obra, assim como de suas relações com a educação. Desta forma, buscamos apreender a forma como o autor compreende tal conceito no decorrer das continuidades e descontinuidades teóricas de sua produção. Para isso, foi realizada uma pesquisa teórica com base nos textos de Vigotski, escritos entre 1924 e 1931, devidamente contextualizada na totalidade de sua obra. Isto posto, Vigotski apreende a personalidade de três diferentes formas: 1) como um sistema de reações; 2) como um sistema superior de reações mediadas; e 3)

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como drama social. Conclui-se que, além de salientar a importância científica, política e educacional dos estudos da personalidade, Vigotski tece importantes reflexões acerca de sua formação.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento da Personalidade; Vigotski; Psicologia Histórico-Cultural; Drama.

RESUMEN

Aunque no construyó una teoría de la personalidad, Vigotski desarrolla importantes reflexiones sobre la naturaleza y formación de esta categoría a lo largo de su obra, así como sus relaciones con la educación. De esta manera, buscamos comprender la manera en que este autor entiende este concepto a lo largo de las continuidades y discontinuidades teóricas de su producción. Para tal fin, se realizó una investigación teórica basada en los textos de Vigotski, escritos entre 1924 y 1931, debidamente contextualizados dentro del conjunto de su obra. Dicho esto, Vigotski entiende la personalidad de tres maneras diferentes: 1) como un sistema de reacciones; 2) como un sistema superior de reacciones mediadas; y 3) como drama social. Por ello, además de resaltar la importancia científica, política y educacional de los estudios de la personalidad, Vigotski hace importantes reflexiones sobre su formación.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo de la Personalidad; Vigotski; Psicología Histórico-Cultural; Drama.

1 Introduction

Lev Semyonovich Vigotski, a renowned Soviet psychologist, was born in 1896 and died prematurely in 1934. He was jointly responsible for the creation of what later became known as the Cultural-Historical Theory (Toassa & Marques, 2023). During his brief yet intense period of scholarly work, Vigotski sought to understand various phenomena related to human development. This article aims to systematize and present the Soviet author's considerations on personality. While he did not develop a formal theory of personality, it would be incorrect to suggest that he disregarded this subject, as it is a recurring theme throughout his work. The inclusion of this theoretical discussion is no coincidence, as the debate about reconstructing human personality and constructing the "new Soviet man" had been a central political and academic theme since the mid-1920s (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). According to Vigotski (1930/2023a, p. 170), the socialist revolution and its "new forms of organization of social relations" necessitate "a transformation of human personality, a remaking of the human being itself." Therefore, we begin with a specific research problem: How did Vigotski understand the concept of personality?

The importance of studying personality also permeated the specific issues in psychology during that era. Even today, the ongoing debate about personality highlights its continued relevance in the theoretical and methodological discussions of historical-cultural psychology. To support this idea, we refer to Vigotski's (1924/2003, p. 283) emphasis on personality in his discussion of pedagogical processes. He states that "Ultimately, education [vospitanie] always has to do with the diverse personalities of students." This connection is also evident in the purpose of education, which is fundamentally linked to promoting human and social development by fostering singularities. Similarly, the author emphasizes the importance of studying this category in relation to disability and illness.

As we will see below, Vigotski (1931/2000a) understood personality as a synthetic category that is potentially organizing and active in human psychological experience. Thus, understanding individuals, their development, and their actions requires understanding personality and its relationships. For Vigotski, personality mediates the connection between various psychological processes and consequently contributes to the configuration of its regulatory function. In other words, examining a person's personality is necessary to understand their behavior (Vigotski, 1929/2000).

Therefore, as Vigotski (1929/2000, 1931/2000a) shows, progress in the theoretical and methodological fields of psychology requires the study of personality as one of its central categories. Despite being accused of "neglecting the concept of personality," Vigotski(1930/2023b, p. 178) asserts that he adopts the category of personality as a highly complex psychological phenomenon that "must be subjected to resolution and verification in the process of experimental investigation" since it is present "in all explanations of psychological functions."

To elucidate the general characteristics and psychological functioning of personality, Vigotski makes assertions that remain central throughout his body of work. In general, he understands personality as a uniquely human trait (Vigotski, 1924/2022c, 1931/2000b) that results from the internalization of socially conditioned life processes (Vigotski, 1924/2003, 1928/2022b, 1929/2022, 1929/2000, 1930/2023b, 1931/2022b, 1931/1997, 1931/2000b, 1931/2000c, 1931/2000d). Therefore, although personality may have significant relationships with organic elements, it should not be understood as the result of a mechanical sum

of environmental and biological components (Vigotski, 1924/2003, 1928/2022a, 1931/1997, 1931/2000a, 1931/2000e, 1931/2000f). As a non-static synthesis (Vigotski, 1924/2003, 1928/2022b, 1931/1997, 1931/2000f), personality has the capacity to organize psychological experience (Vigotski, 1924/2003, 1924/2022a, 1929/2000, 1931/2022c, 1931/2000b, 1931/2000f).

However, merely noting these general considerations is not enough, since the true meaning Vigotski attributes to personality can only be understood when contextualized and related to the evolution of his theoretical work. The Soviet author engages in significant self-criticism throughout his academic work, which leads to theoretical and methodological shifts and qualitative changes in his line of thought (Toassa & Marques, 2023).

To contextualize this concept, we will use the chronological framework proposed by Toassa and Marques (2023). According to the authors, Vigotski's work can be divided into three phases. The first phase, from 1912 to 1924, is characterized by his interest in art and a gradual approach to Marxism. However, this phase will not be discussed in this text because the author's focus during this stage falls outside the scope of this study. The second phase, which occurred between 1924 and 1927, is marked by Vigotski's deepening engagement with psychology as he attempted to align with the precepts of Marxism. The third phase, from 1928 to 1934, is when Vigotski's contribution to historical-cultural theory emerges and develops. To better contextualize Vigotski's discussion of personality, we adopt the notion that the final phase is subdivided into instrumental and semantic stages, and according to Zavershneva and Van der Veer (2018a), a transitional period occurred between these two subphases of Vigotski's work from 1930 to 1931.

Using this chronological framework, we conducted a theoretical study to discuss the concept of personality in the second phase, the first subphase of the third phase, and the transitional period of Vigotski's work, spanning from 1924 to 1931. The final years of his work are not explored in this study due to the author's decreasing frequency of addressing this theme⁴ (Zavershneva & Van Der Veer, 2018a).

⁴ We acknowledge that not analyzing the use of this concept in Vigotski's later scholarly work and theoretical maturity prevents a comprehensive understanding of his theoretical development regarding the concept.

To this end, texts by the Soviet author written during this period that mention the concept of personality⁵ were selected. These texts were published in Portuguese, Spanish, and English. After reading and compiling data from these texts, we organized their core content on personality into tables, subdivided by time period, notably 1924, 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1931. Next, we analyzed the meaning of the concept of personality⁶, understanding it in relation to the author's overall theoretical framework. We contextualized this analysis within the broader scope of his theoretical work, supplementing it with the insights of thinkers who have investigated this process, particularly Van der Veer and Valsiner (1991); Zavershneva and Van der Veer (2018a, 2018b); Delari Jr. (2020a, 2020b), and Toassa and Marques (2023). Furthermore, the organization of this text draws on the work of Delari Jr. (2020a) to advance contextualization and in-depth exploration of the concept within the Vygotskian framework.

2 Personality as a System of Reactions

In 1924, Vigotski adopted Kornilov's concept of reaction as the foundation of his theoretical, methodological, and worldview thinking. According to Vigotski, human behavior is the result of a series of reactions to stimuli, involving reception, processing, and response. This chain served as the basis for explaining complex behaviors, which he understood as the product of the relationship between unconditioned reflexes and environmental stimuli. According to this perspective, all human behavior could be explained based on its naturally unconditioned foundation (Van Der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

However, Vigotski acknowledged that adopting this perspective could lead to the fallacious understanding that human beings merely exist as devices that react mechanically to stimuli. To overcome this problem, Vigotski incorporated the Marxist discussion of the human capacity to anticipate the outcome of one's activities. He asserted that reactions constitute a form of "doubled experience."

⁵ Texts by the author that made no mention of the concept of personality within the chosen time frame were not selected.

⁶ Among these, we highlight the contributions presented in the 1929 manuscript (Vigotski, 1929/2000) because we believe it is the text in which the author sets forth his most developed understanding of the concept of personality.

Based on this idea, Vigotski seeks to explain consciousness as a form of internal reaction to the stimulus that arises in response to the external stimulus (Van Der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). Through this line of thought, Vigotski concludes that psychological processes are constituted by the internalization of relational experiences, which leads to the formation of an internal structure of reactions.

Drawing on this reactological conception of personality, Vigotski uses the concepts of "temperament" and "character" to explain how it functions. The relationship between temperament and character is closely intertwined and expressed as a facet of the nature-nurture problem, which could only be overcome by advances in reflexological theory (Vigotski, 1924/2003). From this perspective, Vigotski (1924/2003, p. 267) defines temperament as the "most physiological and biological concept, encompassing the sphere of personality that manifests itself in instinctive, emotional, and reflexive reactions," and character as "the particular structuring of personality that develops under the influence of acquired reactions." Thus, "the problem is defined as follows: temperament is the existing premise, and character is the result of the educational process" (Vigotski, 1924/2003, p. 267).

Vigotski (1924/2003) argues that temperament has the capacity to determine the rhythm, dynamism, and strength of one's actions, thereby conditioning the way the human body moves. This element would also be valuable in psychological assessments of aptitude and in determining subjects' suitability for work. With this in mind, Vigotski (1924/2003, p. 273) states that "it would be very easy to break down any professional work into the primary elements that compose it." However, Vigotski acknowledges the limits of this causal correlation, stating that complex behaviors are more closely related to character than temperament (Vigotski, 1924/2003).

Thus, the relationship between temperament and character does not unfold in a linear or mechanical manner, nor does it result in a harmoniously perfect personality. On the contrary, character, understood as the structure of personality, constitutes "an incessant rupture and conflict of personal life with inherited experience" (Vigotski, 1924/2003, p. 280).

However, the actual meaning of this statement requires clarification of the specific nature of this contradictory tension. Following the principles of reactology, Vigotski understands this conflict as a fundamentally individual process occurring

between the organism and its surrounding environment. At this stage of his theoretical work, Vigotski uses the term *environment* to refer to the set of stimuli present in the individual's immediate surroundings, which are linked to the unconditioned reflexes that constitute the organism's biological inheritance. Accordingly, personality is understood as a continuous process of internalized reactions resulting from the interplay between biological and environmental factors, as well as between inherited and acquired elements (Vigotski, 1924/2003).

The idea that personality develops through a series of reactions is evident in his early concepts of compensation and supercompensation. According to Vigotski (1924/2022a), supercompensation is a reactive, compensatory process that plays an important role in the personality system. Influenced by Adler's individual psychology, this concept is based on the idea that such compensatory tendencies are natural, automatic reactions of children⁷, forming the primary stimulus for personality development (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). According to this theory, the struggle that shapes personality is directed "toward the solution of a single task: to occupy a specific position with respect to the immanent logic of human society and the demands of social existence" (Vigotski, 1924/2022a, p. 74). In other words, society has the capacity to organize the environment in a way that influences the struggle that constitutes the personality of certain individuals. These demands direct the process of overcompensation toward a sense of normality, shaping personality based on certain non-harmonic social types (Vigotski, 1924/2022a).

In short, Vigotski believed that personality develops as a structure of internalized reactions resulting from the tension between biological and environmental elements. This structure simultaneously guides an individual's reaction to environmental stimuli. The environment, a key factor in the struggle that shapes personality, consists of stimuli that affect the organism and are indirectly organized by society. Overall, it can be concluded that Vigotski viewed personality as an individual psychological process resulting from continuous tension between

⁷ This discussion highlights the compensatory development of the personalities of children with disabilities. However, the explanation of this formative mechanism can be generalized to children without disabilities (Vigotski, 1924/2022b).

natural and socially organized environmental forces. In short, Vigotski (1924/2022a, p. 75) states that.

Just as the course of a river is determined by its banks and riverbed, the psychological main current and the life path of a person who is developing and growing are determined, with the necessary objectivity, by social conditions and the “social banks” of the personality.

3 Personality as a higher-order system of mediated reactions

In mid-1928, Vigotski made key changes to his thinking about psychological problems and began developing the historical-cultural theory. This was also the year that marked the end of Vigotski's engagement with Adler's individual psychology. This contributed to Vigotski's eventual adoption of a more structural view of personality (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

This phase of Vigotski's thought is often referred to as the "instrumental" subphase (Toassa & Marques, 2023), during which the author emphasizes the role of mediation provided by physical and psychological instruments in human development. Vigotski asserts that human beings have historically constructed artificial social devices that mediate their relationship with nature and enable their mastery over it. Just as tools allow humans to connect with and transform nature, psychological instruments reorganize the subject's relationship with themselves, enabling self-mastery (Vigotski, 1930/2004).

The instrumental act is carried out by inserting an intermediate stimulus into what was previously a direct associative connection. Vigotski (1930/2004, p. 95) argues that the psychological instrument replaces the "A-B connection with two: A-X and X-B, which lead to the same result by a different path." Through this process, the instrumental act promotes the creation of new functions while suppressing, reorganizing, and modifying other natural processes. Directed toward the self, the psychological instrument reflects and reproduces the activity performed, enabling the individual to master their own behavior (Vigotski, 1930/2004). This mediation occurs through the introduction of a socially produced mediating stimulus referred to as a "sign."

The mediation facilitated by the mediating stimulus should not be understood as an exclusively operational, mechanical process. Its introduction enables the internalization of objective reality, the requalification of psychological functions, and the construction of the psyche as a subjective reality. This process presupposes that the subject has experienced such processes in their relationships, which occur in a particular way through the mediation of the system of signs present in a given culture (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

Therefore, Delari Jr. (2020a, p. 57) shows that Vigotski 's conception of internalization at this stage of his academic career is based on the idea that "a person's relationship with themselves is viewed as 'transformation' arising from their relationship with others, but the function of the sign is limited to that of a 'mediating stimulus' or 'psychological instrument.'" Despite the theoretical originality of this line of thought, it is evident that there is still some influence of Kornilov's reactology (Delari Jr., 2020b). In Vigotski 's words (1930/2004, p. 97), "The totality of the contents of the instrumental act fits entirely within a system of stimuli and reactions."

Thus, when discussing personality, Vigotski understands it as a process shaped by reactions. In other words, personality is the result of a compensatory response to a difficulty experienced by a particular individual (Vigotski, 1928/2022a). Keeping this in mind, Vigotski (1928/2022b) expands the concept of compensation, arguing that all children use it to adapt to their environment, regardless of whether they have a disability. Mediated by education, compensation enables the transformation of the individual into a social subject and consequently the development of their personality. However, personality is not merely a linear result of this reaction; personality itself reacts to compensate for difficulties in one's life (Vigotski, 1928/2022a, 1929/2022).

While personality is still considered the result of reactions, Vigotski offers a new perspective on how these reactions occur. Thus, what had previously been conceived as the internalization of a direct reaction came to be conceived as the result of a process mediated by specific signs. This shift is evident in his explanation of personality development in children with disabilities. According to Vigotski (1928/2022b, p. 231), just as with the entire human psyche, character development is rooted in the need "to live within the historical social environment and reorganize all organic functions according to

the demands of that environment." This need may arise from difficulties resulting from the disability, which, in turn, are a product of the social valuation or devaluation of the individual. According to Vigotski (1929/2022, p. 40),

First, the defect itself always manifests as a secondary, indirect, and reflexive phenomenon. As previously explained, the child does not directly experience the defect. Rather, the child perceives the difficulties that result from the defect. The direct consequence of the defect is the lowering of the child's social status; the defect manifests as "a social dislocation." [...] Within the two-part process of "defect-compensation," a third, intermediate element is included: "defect-feeling of inferiority-compensation."

This means that personality cannot be understood as a static, additive phenomenon. Rather, it must be considered in the context of an individual's unique life trajectory, which transforms "a person's life history from a collection of disconnected and fragmented episodes into a unified and coherent biographical process" (Vigotski, 1928/2022b, p. 232). Thus, as a unique whole governed by its own laws, personality undergoes qualitative transformations that give rise to the continuous construction and reconstruction of its distinctive identity. In constructing new systems of adaptation, this compensatory process opens the door to alternative developmental pathways (Vigotski, 1929/2022).

All the psychological functions that constitute the human psyche and its development are interlinked with the formation of personality (Vigotski, 1929/2022). In other words, "the variety of relatively independent functions in development and the unity of the entire process of personality development, far from contradicting one another—as Stern demonstrated—are mutually conditioned" (Vigotski, 1929/2022, p. 48).

In summary, although personality formation continues to be explained by the reaction process, Vigotski understands it as a reaction mediated by socially constituted intermediate stimuli, or signs. Thus, Vigotski redefines his understanding of personality by reorganizing his conceptual framework of the human psyche and moving beyond the reactionist theoretical foundation that characterized his earlier explanation. Following this logic, personality development—as well as that of all human psychological functions—is not the natural, spontaneous result of tension between biological and

environmental elements. Rather, it is the result of the dialectical transcendence of its elementary form of existence. This transcendence occurs through the construction, appropriation, and use of psychological instruments. Thus, Vigotski attributes an active quality to personality, highlighting its potential to reorganize and construct new spaces that mediate our relationship to reality.

4 Personality as Social Drama

According to Zavershneva and Van der Veer (2018a), the works published between 1930 and 1931 mark a transitional period in Vigotski's theoretical framework. The following five aspects characterize this period: 1) his self-criticism of the external function of the sign as a mediating stimulus and the isolated functioning of each psychological function, 2) his adoption of a systemic approach to understanding the human psyche, 3) his study of the interfunctional connections produced by the sign and his emphasis on the development of new functional systems as a uniquely human characteristic, 4) the specificity of the process by which each of these functional systems forms at different stages of ontogenetic development, and 5) his growing emphasis on the semantic dimension of the sign, its meaning.

However, elements of this transitional period were present in his personal, reflective writings from 1929 and remained in his theory after he adopted the semantic principle in 1932. Not surprisingly, this theoretical reorganization also led to changes in how the Soviet thinker conceived of personality. Personality became a prominent category during this transitional period in his work (Zavershneva & Van Der Veer, 2018a, 2018b).

In his self-critique of internalization as a process mediated by environmental stimuli, Vigotski began to value the semantic function of signs, their meaning, more and more. The word, responsible for mediating the relationship between subjects, began to be understood as a sign of unique nature, historical origin, and conceptual character (Zavershneva & Van Der Veer, 2018b). According to Vigotski (1930/2023b), this process is expressed in the dynamics of internalization as the basis for the construction of personality. As the author wrote, "In personality, forms of behavior that were previously shared between two people are united: command and execution. Previously, they originated from two brains, one acting upon the other, so to speak, with the help of the word" (Vigotski, 1930/2023b, p. 206).

Thus, personality formation arises from a process of internalization grounded in social relations mediated by language within its historical and semantic context. In other words, personality is "the set of social relations embodied in the individual" (Vigotski, 1929/2000, p. 33). As he summarized in 1931, "Personality is the social within us" (Vigotski, 1931/2000f, p. 337). "It can be said, therefore, that we become ourselves through others [...] Personality becomes for itself what it is in itself through what it signifies for others. This is the process of personality formation" (Vigotski, 1931/2000d, p. 149).

Thus, this process of internalization does not result from merely contextualized relationships, as if they occurred between individuals whose relationships were only superficially influenced by socio-environmental factors. Rather, these relationships carry and reproduce the socially produced meanings and contradictions arising from the class struggle. As Vigotski (1931/2022a, p. 293) wrote, "Everywhere and in every place, the development of the child's personality manifests itself as a function of the development of their collective behavior," which is constructed and guided by the educational process. In other words, "education, understood in the broadest sense of the word, must be the fundamental axis around which the entire development of the child's personality is structured" (Vigotski, 1931/1997, p. 20).

This idea brought with it a reorganization of the conception of the individual-society problem previously present in his work. To explain this shift, it is helpful to recall that in 1924 Vigotski (1924/2003) argued that temperament and character, as sets of innate and acquired reactions, could organize an individual's abilities, activities, and social relationships. However, Vigotski now reverses this logic, abandoning the idea that character organizes social activity and adopting the notion that social activity organizes and hierarchizes character (Vigotski, 1930/2023b).

Similarly, the individual's social activity is not merely a means of internalizing social relationships and shaping their personality. Rather, through this activity, individuals can also transform the reality that constitutes their personality (Vigotski, 1930/2023a). Drawing on the Marxian concept of labor, Vigotski explains that this activity has infinite potential to transform human reality and consequently the social relations underlying the formation of one's personality.

Once active, historical, and semantically mediated, the process of internalizing the social relations that constitute personality promotes the continuous organization and reorganization of a systemic whole. In this whole, personality is part of an interfunctional system that forms the human psyche. Thus, Vigotski 's emphasis on personality at this stage of his work is consistent with a systemic approach. In this new way of thinking, the focus shifts from functions to the interfunctional systems formed with the help of signs and organized hierarchically throughout the ontogenetic process (Zavershneva & Van der Veer, 2018b).

Thus, personality occupies a special position in relation to higher psychological functions (Vigotski, 1930/2023b). According to a systemic understanding of this relationship, personality simultaneously affects and is affected by the higher psychological functions, intertwining the processes of their mutual development (Vigotski, 1929/2000, 1930/2023b). While the higher psychological functions "are the foundation of the social structure of personality" (Vigotski, 1931/2000d, p. 361), their development is subordinate to that of personality. In other words, "the development of each specific function derives from the overall development of the personality" (Vigotski, 1931/2000f, p. 329). By exercising a regulatory role, the personality alters the function of certain mental processes, systems, layers, and strata, establishing connections that do not and cannot exist in the biology of the personality (Vigotski, 1929/2000, p. 32).

This mutual reorientation contributes to the development of self-control and the regulation of one's behavior (Vigotski, 1929/2000; 1930/2023b; 1931/2000f). In other words, "we could say that the personality assists and participates, as an invisible being, in the process of mastering one's reactions" (Vigotski, 1931/2000f, p. 329). In short, Vigotski (1931/2000f, p. 329) demonstrates that

The essence of cultural development consists, as we have seen, in man's mastery over the processes of his own behavior. But the essential premise of this mastery is the formation of the person in such a way that the development of any given function depends on and is always conditioned by the overall development of the personality.

Within this systemic framework, Vigotski (1930/2023b, p. 197) argues that characterizing personality "at the genetic and differential levels" is based on self-

awareness and the ability to consciously link different functions, forming "a unique system of behavior." However, although personality formation reflects important links with consciousness, personality functioning is not always contingent upon consciousness (Vigotski, 1931/1997, 1931/2022c). Thus, "personality constitutes a hierarchy of activities, not all of which are linked to consciousness; therefore, the sphere of the psyche is broader than the sphere of consciousness (in the sense of immediate consciousness)" (Vigotski, 1931/2022c, p. 418).

The process of personality formation is closely related to the development of higher psychological functions and consciousness, and is sensitive to changes occurring at each stage of the individual's development. Thus, the investigation of personality must be based on two analytical approaches: diagnosis and prognosis. Diagnosis is grounded in an analysis of the personality's past and present to understand the internal logic of its development. Based on this analysis, the psychologist should seek to predict what will happen in the personality's future stages, understand the definitive outcome of the developmental process, and what the mature personality will ultimately be like (Vigotski, 1931/1997, p. 31).

In seeking to understand this process, Vigotski (1931/2000f) emphasizes the emergence of "self-awareness" and the formation of a worldview as crucial components of personality development. According to Vigotski (1931/2000f, p. 333), "the newborn completely lacks even the most primitive 'self,' personality, and conception of the world." He states that the interconnection between personality, "self" awareness, and worldview begins to manifest during the play phase of a child's development. During this phase, the child develops an extremely unstable sense of "self" and worldview due to the playful nature of this developmental period. Thus, the child "can easily change personalities, become someone else, or remain themselves, just as any object can become something else" (Vigotski, 1931/2000f, p. 338).

This process transforms during the school-age phase of development when "a more stable and consistent personality and conception of the world are formed for the first time" (Vigotski, 1931/2000f, p. 338). According to Vigotski (1931/2000f, p. 339), "Nothing better demonstrates the social origin of the child's personality than the fact that it grows, takes shape, and matures only through the expansion, deepening, and differentiation of social experience."

However, this developmental process becomes more refined and complex during adolescence, when the individual refines their thinking by moving beyond complex associations and acquiring the ability to think conceptually. Conceptual thinking is based on a system of judgments that brings together a network of relationships among specific objects, enabling a more complex and comprehensive understanding of them in relation to the whole (Vigotski, 1930/2023b). In short, Vigotski (1930/2023b, p. 197) states that:

The transitional age is the age when one's worldview and personality are formed, when self-awareness emerges, and when coherent representations of the world take shape. The foundation for this is conceptual thinking, and for us, the entire experience of contemporary cultural humanity—the external world, external reality, and our internal reality—is framed within a certain system of concepts.

Stemming from the individual's history of cultural development, this process of continuous systemic transformation enables the personality to emerge as a "higher psychic synthesis" (Vigotski, 1931/2000a, p. 45). For Vigotski (1931/2000c), this creates an interplay between cultural forms of behavior and personality development, since such behaviors enable the incorporation of new relationships and the construction of new systems. Thus, while the process of personality formation is grounded in the constitution of one's worldview and sense of "self"—which, in turn, are actively produced and internalized within concrete, semantically mediated social relationships—personality itself has the capacity to construct and reorganize these systems, thereby transforming the psychological elements that shaped it. That is, while the personality results from all these components, it also transforms them. And, ultimately, it transforms its own process of formation.

In other words, the artificial dualism of environment and heredity leads us down the wrong path, obscuring the fact that development is a continuous, self-regulating process, not a puppet controlled by two strings (Vigotski, 1931/1997, p. 20).

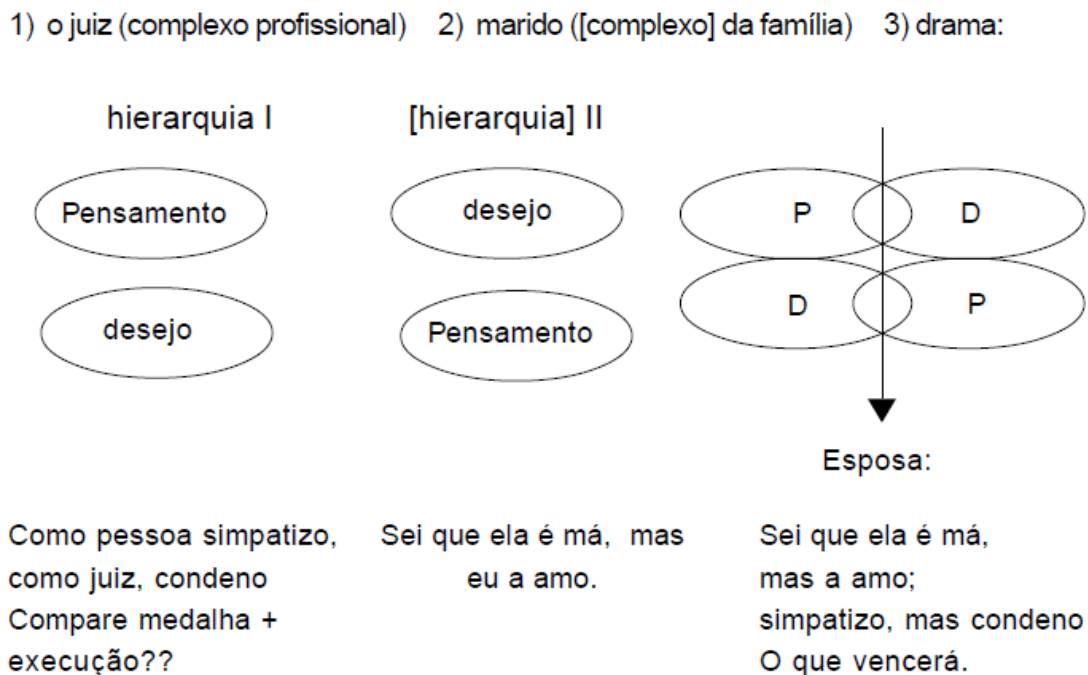
Furthermore, in addition to offering considerations regarding the process of personality development, Vigotski (1929/2000) reflects on the specific nature of its dynamics. On this point, Vigotski (1929/2000, p. 35) summarizes, "The dynamics of

personality are drama." To understand this statement, however, we must examine the meaning attributed to the word "drama." Drawing on its theatrical meaning, Vigotski uses the term "drama" to refer to the different dimensions of human life involving situations with internal tension that demand decisions leading to conflicting, mutually exclusive paths (Delari Jr., 2020a). In Vigotski's words, "Drama is always the struggle between such connections"; it is the "clash of systems" (1929/2000, p. 35).

To explain the dynamics of this internal clash, Vigotski (1929/2000) discusses conflicting hierarchies. For example, he cites the drama in Othello when the character experiences the conflict between his duty and his feelings when deciding to murder his wife, who has betrayed him. Thus, "the drama is indeed replete with connections of this kind: the role of passion, avarice, and jealousy within a given personality structure" (Vigotski, 1929/2000, p. 34).

However, the content of the drama does not arise spontaneously or remain limited to the individual experiencing it. That individual's unique existence is mediated by the social role occupied by a given subject (Vigotski, 1929/2000; Delari Jr., 2020a). Keeping this in mind, Vigotski (1929/2000) uses the example of a judge who must sentence his wife and experiences an internal conflict between his feelings as a husband and his reasoning as a judge. According to Vigotski (1929/2000, p. 37), "The social role (judge, doctor) determines the hierarchy of functions; that is, functions alter the hierarchy across different spheres of social life. Their clash = the drama." In other words, the judge experiences tension between two hierarchies. In the first hierarchy, as a judge, the professional complex's thinking takes precedence over desire. In the second, however, as a husband, the desires of the family complex take precedence over thinking. It is within this tension that the drama unfolds.

Figure 1- Drama schematized by Vigotski



Source: (Vigotski, 1929/2000)

However, social roles alone do not determine how a narrative will unfold. They only specify how the concepts that define this tension will be internalized. Consider the drama Othello experienced, driven by feelings of betrayal and jealousy. The course of the drama could have been altered—or even prevented—if a character had held different views on marriage and fidelity. As Vigotski (1930/2023b, p. 201) points out, "Who doesn't know that the jealousy of an individual bound by Islamic concepts of female fidelity differs from that of an individual bound by a system of opposing representations regarding female fidelity?"

Once contextualized and historically conditioned, personality development is influenced by the prevailing sociopolitical order. Assuming that "the formation of the human type has a class character, a class nature, and class distinctions," Vigotski (1930/2023a, p. 163) asserts that "the internal contradiction of this type of structure is also expressed in the constitution of personality, in the structure of the human psyche of a given era." Capitalist society, with its alienating nature, organizes social life in a way that degrades the personality and its potential for development (Vigotski, 1930/2023a). Building on Engels's work, Vigotski (1930/2023a) claims that capitalist

labor organization generates class distinctions and disintegration, which result in the deformation, disfigurement, and one-sidedness of the human personality. However, just as with capitalist society itself and the labor it organizes, the dynamics of personality formation in this society carry the contradiction that the source of its impoverishment can be the path to its transformation and overcoming. In other words, capitalist labor degrades and mutilates the personality while also carrying the possibility of developing it (Vigotski, 1930/2023a). Nevertheless, the Soviet author emphasizes that this contradiction cannot be resolved without overcoming the capitalist system itself, which is the basis for this contradictory form of personality organization (Vigotski, 1930/2023a).

Thus, one of the revolutionary tasks is to reorganize the personality to "make a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom" (Vigotski, 1930/2023a, p. 172). For Vigotski, this means promoting the development of a higher level of personality. Unlike Nietzschean conceptions, however, Vigotski (1930/2023a) argues that this development does not result from individualistic self-assertion that negates and overcomes the collective. Rather, it occurs as the fruit of a historical process culminating in the political liberation of all of society. In Vigotski 's words, "Only by raising all of humanity to a higher level of social life—only through the liberation of all of humanity—can a new type of human being emerge" (1930/2023a, p. 173).

5 Final Considerations

Throughout his body of work, one often encounters claims that Vigotski never developed a theory of personality. This is true. However, this does not mean that his work lacks important reflections and considerations that advance this debate. Through these reflections and considerations, Vigotski does more than lay a superficial foundation for subsequent studies of personality. He also demonstrates significant theoretical advancement and depth in his arguments.

As demonstrated throughout this text, Vigotski 's theoretical path during his brief years of scholarly work was accompanied by shifts in his considerations of human personality. For this reason, we emphasize that understanding his conception of personality is a dynamic process that must be continually contextualized within the scope of his entire body of work. Although we recognize that this article helps us understand

how the author conceptualizes personality within a specific time frame, we also emphasize the need for future studies that expand our understanding of personality's role in Vigotski 's later work, particularly in relation to lived experience (*perezhivanie*). Personality plays a specific, largely unexplored role in this concept.

Furthermore, understanding the social determinants and dramatic dynamics of personality helps us develop educational debates and pedagogical strategies that intentionally promote human emancipation. While this emancipation enables the formation of increasingly free personalities, it cannot be achieved separately from or before the formation of these singularities. In other words, human emancipation and personality development are unified in a movement in which they are both the product and prerequisite of one another, mediated by the educational process. In other words, we must advance studies and research on the relationship between personality development and the role of schooling.

At the heart of this process, we can synthesize Vigotski's conception of personality by revisiting his early metaphor: personality as a river. In this metaphor, we see that the river itself—representing the flow of personality—transforms. Initially, personality is understood as the result of the natural flow of water, guided by secondary forces along its banks. Later, however, personality is understood as the product of the tension between the water's natural tendencies and the organizing action of the elements that shape its reality (rocks, moss, and banks). This tension reshapes the reality of how the water flows. During the transitional period of his work, Vigotski notes that it is impossible to understand the river as merely the sum of the factors that comprise this scenario. Rather, these elements are understood as existing only in relation to the other units of this system. All of these units relate to one another dynamically in specific ways, creating a living river in motion. This river does not exist a priori; rather, it arises from the contradictory and dramatic tension among the units that comprise it. Thus, we recognize that personality does not fully explain or determine the subject, just as a river does not fully explain the forest's reality. Similarly, however, the forest and the full dynamism of its ecosystem could not be explained without considering the life that pulses through the river flowing through it.

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