

Chapter 1

Perezhivanie, Emotions and Subjectivity: Setting the Stage

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Abstract This chapter captures and explores three key themes relevant to the concepts of emotions, perezhivanie and subjectivity. In analysing and transcending how these concepts have been primarily discussed in the past, this chapter goes beyond social determinism and theorises how a cultural-historical perspective on these concepts has led to new understandings of the human psyche. Rather than examining emotions, perezhivanie and subjectivity as the result of internalised operations, this chapter puts forward the view that these concepts must be studied as a generative system inseparable from the individual. In advancing upon the original writings of Vygotsky and others who have followed this theoretical tradition, it is argued that all three concepts are inseparable from the complex network within which human activities and human relationships form and develop. It is through understanding the human psyche as the unity of social, personal and environmental characteristics, that it becomes possible to advance on the essence of the three concepts that are the focus of this book, and thereby generate new understandings of what might constitute a contemporary reading of perezhivanie, emotions and subjectivity.

1.1 Introduction

This chapter and those that follow, aim to bring together topics that for a long time have been relegated to a secondary place within cultural-historical theory. Historically, more attention has been paid to cognitive psychological functions,

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its mediation and its internalised and mediated character than to the active character of emotions and their integration into more complex processes, such as imagination and fantasy. Those psychological processes related to imagination, emotion and fantasy were at the centre of attention in Vygotsky's "The Psychology of Art" and in his later works. The final moment of Vygotsky's work was focused on such concepts as sense, *perezhivanie*, emotions, imagination and the understanding of thinking as inseparable from emotions. However, their interrelation and definition remained unclear and open to further development. Some authors addressed Vygotsky's advancement at the end of his life as a new psychological definition of consciousness based on the concept of sense (Leontiev 1992; Zavershneva 2010, 2016).

The aforementioned concepts have in common Vygotsky's search for the unity of cognitive and affective processes. In the case of *perezhivanie*, Vygotsky made explicit his comprehension of it as a new psychological unit of consciousness. Without any doubt, those concepts need to be developed and, on this basis, new theoretical pathways for cultural-historical psychology should be advanced. This is one of the main objectives of this book and is the focus on this chapter.

This book advances on Vygotsky's legacy, elucidating articulations between emotions, *perezhivanie* and subjectivity, in such a way that each section highlights new theoretical constructions that are closely related to the methodological demands of psychological research. In this chapter we analyse this diversity and through this put forward a new perspective on the concepts of emotions, *perezhivanie* and subjectivity. In our opinion, these concepts do not represent isolated definitions, but different levels of integration of psychological functioning, which have the following consequences for advancing Vygotsky's cultural-historical legacy:

1. The concepts of emotions, *perezhivanie* and subjectivity, as discussed in the book, transcend the social determinism that was dominant both within Soviet psychology and many of the works in the field of the Vygotskian studies until today.
2. These concepts led to an understanding of the human psyche not as the result of internalised operations, but as a generative system inseparable from the individual. These concepts, within this cultural-historical theorisation, were first introduced by Vygotsky. Emotions, *perezhivanie* and subjectivity when conceptualised in this way, generate alternative psychological resources within one concrete experience.
3. All three concepts are inseparable from the complex network within which human activities and human relationships occur, but they do not necessarily result from any immediate processes.

This chapter and the chapters that follow in this book not only propose new interpretations of Vygotsky's legacy but also advance Vygotsky's definition, opening new theoretical avenues together with new concrete practices for researching within and across communities, families and institutions. We begin with an analysis of how the concept of subjectivity has been used in research, followed by drawing out the new perspective on emotions that is advanced in this

book, concluding on the concept of perezhivanie. It is this latter concept that has been of major interest to many contemporary scholars of cultural-historical theory, and it is this term that has attracted the most diversity in conceptualisation. We conclude this chapter and begin the book on what this diversity of perspectives offer scholars of cultural-historical theory and researchers interested in using this concept to progress understandings of development through their empirical work.

1.2 Advancing the Concept of Subjectivity

Subjectivity, as defined in the final part of the book (Chaps. 9–11), gives one possible set of pathways for embodying the legacy of the last of Vygotsky's concepts in his new psychological system for understanding human development. Subjectivity founded a new ontological domain of human phenomena, whether social or individual, which is inseparable from the cultural-social world within which human beings live their experiences. Few authors have attempted to advance the concept of subjectivity from a cultural-historical standpoint. Those attempts have not always been done from a cultural historical perspective founded on the Soviet psychology legacy (e.g., Holzkamp 1991). Within Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), Stetsenko and Arieivitch (2004) attempted to put self and subjectivity into focus in their theorisation of subjectivity. These scholarly works have not defined subjectivity as a new ontological domain of human phenomena. The former narrowed its definition to one specific concept, while the latter understood subjectivity as an epiphenomenon of activity. This has left room for other ways of theorising subjectivity.

The chapters included in the third section of this book depart from the definition of subjectivity as the unit of emotional and symbolical processes that form a new qualitative phenomenon. The concepts of subjective senses and subjective configurations define human experiences as they are experienced by individuals, groups and institutions. Symbolical processes have generally been narrowly treated in cultural-historical psychology. Those who have taken a more narrow focus have conceptualised symbolic processes in the social environment as a constellation of concrete events and objects, rather than as networks of symbolically produced realities, such as institutionalised orders, myths, religion, moral, gender and race. None of these topics appear to have been the object of theoretical attention in cultural-historical psychology.

Social relationships are living processes within which symbolically produced realities become subjective processes. However, these processes do not result from internalisation. The social symbolical networks turn into two subjectivities; as social and individual subjectivities; so there is not any external process that must become internal, there are process of one form or another that turn into subjective processes; whether social or individual. This is a very complex process within which individuals and groups actively generate different positions during their experiences. Through social relationships, emotions turn into subjective senses and

configurations, as they are integrated with symbolical processes. Subjectivity is not just another concept, but a motivational system within which different psychological processes and functions become subjective as a result of ongoing subjective configurations.

Subjectivity is not “molded by the world ‘absorbing’ and embodying the world in its dynamics and structures”, as Stetsenko and Arievitch (2004, p. 484) stated. Subjectivity represents a new human production that is part of this world, but it never reproduces it; because the world can only be represented through the lenses of those who experience it—as was argued and captured by Vygotsky through his concept of *perezhivanie*. This characteristic of human subjectivity makes the topic very difficult to be assimilated by traditional followers of a cultural-historical approach, due to the pretension of transforming psychology into an objective science. Even Vygotsky, in his instrumental period (1927–1930) took the position of an objectivistic psychology (González Rey 2011; González Rey and Mitjans Martínez 2016; Orlov 2003; Yasnitsky 2009, 2012; Zavershneva 2010, 2016).

As remarked by Leontiev (1967), psyche is the capacity of living beings to react to signals from the environment. Vygotsky emphasised the importance of mediation of signs to define higher psychological functions. According to Vygotsky, such capacity was the main difference between human beings and the rest of the animal species. However, the same Vygotsky, at the end of his life, criticised the emphasis given to mediation as the detriment of the comprehension of the function’s psychological nature (Zavershneva 2016). Subjectivity, unlike signals and signs is essentially self—generative, producing subjective senses that result from the current configuration of the system that is drawn upon and shaped during one concrete experience.

As a new ontological domain shared by all processes and human phenomena, including culture, subjectivity is integrative of processes that historically have been treated separately, as thought, motivation, imagination, perception, personality, among others. These processes and functions become subjective when they are organised within a subjective configuration, as self-organised as a subjective system that generates subjective senses, and whose emergence cannot be explained or be evident to observers as objective elements of the experience. Psychological functions, from this point of view, are not merely cognitive operations, or specific fragmenting entities; they become subjectively configured processes and functions, being connected to the subjective system through their ongoing subjective configurations.

As an introduction to the topic of subjectivity, we see a picture of different trends, as well as authors of Soviet psychology, who historically have appeared as being irreconcilable to each other. On the basis of such a historical overview, different axes are organised, integrating authors, and these are seen through the important contributions made on the concept of subjectivity in this book. The discussion of Soviet authors does not intend to be just a historical introduction, but shows the different angles of these authors, who, having relevance for advancing the discussion on subjectivity, are little known within this theoretical framework.

It is important to stress the relevance of the concept of social subjectivity in order to advance a comprehension of the social organisation as part of a broader definition, integrating a wide range of social symbolical productions. The introduction of this concept as inseparable from individual subjectivity, overcomes the dominant split in psychology between the social organisation and the individual.

As defined in Chap. 9: “The concept of social subjectivity is addressed so as to understand the complex subjective configurations of the different social instances and systems of relationships within the more complex systems of social instances that define society. The recognition of a social subjectivity does not entail the definition of social realities as abstract carriers of subjectivity or as fixed entities presented beforehand as living social dynamics” (p. 186). Individual positions and behaviours are not closed in themselves; they are part of complex networks of social relationships within which social subjective configurations emerge, appearing as different subjective senses, and forming individual subjective configurations. So, individual and social subjectivity configure each other in such a way that one is always part of the other through specific subjective senses generated in each of these instances. These complex processes are not intentionally represented by individual or social agents.

Dialogue and communication have a decisive role on the genesis and development of subjectivity because they are the main channels through which emotions are produced, captured as subjective senses as a result of the presence of the symbolical rituals associated with the emergence of the other, as partners in communication from early childhood. This principle allows for a bridge between emotions and subjectivity to emerge. This is discussed in Chap. 8 by Fler and González Rey’s through concrete case examples. In human beings, emotions are not only a reaction to certain external conditions or demands, they are expressed as a complex psychological state that permits or not, one individual to recognise him/herself as being part of some specific social space and relations, as well as feeling how this space or relation is experienced by the individual. In childhood this is an important process that defines, from the very early ages, patterns of emotional reactions that are inseparable from a child’s behaviour.

The methodological and epistemological positions on which subjectivity can be studied according to its theoretical definition, are also developed in the third part of this book. The constructive-interpretative methodological approach, supported by Qualitative Epistemology, comprises knowledge as a theoretical construction that advances on hypothetical researcher’s constructions (indicators). A group of indicators constructed by the researcher gradually become a consistent hypothesis capable of being integrated within the ongoing theoretical model, able to generate intelligibility on subjective senses and subjective configurations.

The discussion on the epistemological and methodological gap in Soviet psychology is necessary, since this discussion has been widely overlooked in a cultural-historical tradition. The dominant idea that any methodological proposal that uses interpretation is phenomenological is a big mistake. Rather, this chapter discusses a constructive-interpretative approach that is different from the one advanced by phenomenological research. In this sense, the general principles of

such epistemological and methodological approaches and the case study that follows the main concepts in this book, make concrete the methodology and theoretical concepts that underpin how subjectivity is advanced in this chapter.

Finally, the concept of subjectivity as discussed in this chapter is used as the basis for advancing a theoretical representation on subjective development. Subjective development is defined as inherently dynamic, variable and singular. It is not immediately determined by external influences and does not follow universal stages or universal principles to explain the different phases. What is evident in the section on subjectivity is not an attempt to give an overview of the classical theories of developmental psychology, because the theoretical demands of advancing subjective development do not allow space to draw such a picture within the scope of the present book. Nevertheless, the most important positions in Soviet psychology regarding developmental psychology are taken into account.

Subjective development allows a bridge between psychotherapy and education, as two closely intermingled processes. Two case studies conducted under this theoretical framework are discussed in depth. In both cases, the changes experienced by the participants were considered as part of a process of subjective development. These chapters give evidence of subjective development in fields that traditionally have not been taken into consideration by different theories within developmental psychology.

What is evident in Sect. 1.3, is that the three chapters integrate, showing how the epistemological and methodological principles of subjectivity are also the basis of a different kind of practice, in which theoretical, epistemological and methodological issues are closely interrelated, not only in research, but also in professional practice. The integrative nature of human development as a generative system that is inseparable from the individual and their social relations and material conditions is revealed through the concepts of subjective sense and subjective configuration— theoretically and empirically.

1.3 Advancing the Concept of Emotions

It has been argued that the psychological processes related to imagination, emotion and fantasy were at the centre of attention in Vygotsky's (1971) "The Psychology of Art" as well as in his later works. In that thesis, and also some of the writing that followed (e.g. Vygotsky 1966, 1998), scholars such as Zaporozhets (2002), stated that imagination and fantasy act as a second expression of human emotions, which is a "psychological mechanism" for "the emergence of emotional anticipation" (p. 57). Emotional anticipation foregrounds imagination, and in this theoretical reading, "emotions are intellectualized, they become intelligent, generalized, and anticipatory, while cognitive processes functioning in this system, acquire an affective nature and begin to perform a special role in meaning discrimination and meaning formation" (p. 57). Vygotsky did not separate out emotions from other psychological processes, such as imagination or cognition. He said, "Among the

most basic defects of traditional approaches to the study of psychology has been the isolation of the intellectual from the volitional and affective aspect of consciousness” (Vygotsky 1987, p. 5) and “There exists a dynamic meaningful system that constitutes *a unity of affective and intellectual processes*” (p. 50). As with the epistemological and methodological foundations of subjectivity, revealed through the concepts of subjective sense and subjective configuration, emotion was also part of an integrative system of concepts which together explain development. This is in contrast with the intellectualised focus of research and theorisation that has dominated education and psychology. The study of emotions has been conspicuously absent.

The integrative conceptual system, in which emotions are examined theoretically and empirically in the middle section of this book, pushes against the separation of emotions from other psychological processes, and this is in line with Vygotsky’s (1999) writing on the teaching about emotions. In drawing upon Vygotsky’s (1997) dialectical concept of inter- and intra-psychological functioning, the studies presented foreground empirically and theoretically how emotions develop culturally but not biologically, and are social rather than just individual. It is argued in the middle section of this book, that it is through the relations between the raw emotions expressed by young children in social contexts and in relation with one another, that raw expressions are culturally framed as particular feeling states. *Emotions are always felt and understood in social contexts with others, where others give meaning to these raw expressions, and it is in these relations with others, that children come to develop emotionally and gain emotion self regulation.* Vadeboncoeur and Collier (2013) have said that, “the logic of feelings, therefore, maintains traces of the social environment given word meaning and sense and, ultimately, comes to reflect a cultural ordering of feelings, what make sense in a particular culture, and expectations of what may occur if actions contradict cultural norms” (p. 217). Holodynski and Seeger (2013) also draw attention to the cultural nature of emotional expressions, being interpreted differently across different cultures. In Chap. 6 the idea of co-experiencing emotions is introduced, and this foregrounds emotions as a shared social endeavour and not as an individual psychological function. *This relational principle transcends social determinism and individual psyche, showing the dynamics of feelings and emotions as cultural expressions, that are culturally interpreted and co-experienced.*

Emotions as part of social and cultural relations also matters in research. Much of the research literature treats the research situation as objective and the researcher must be either absent when in the laboratory or present with a tightly defined script, or as found in ethnographic studies, to be a fly on the wall. In Chap. 8 the role of the researcher in developing a relationship with a child, creates not just developmental conditions for the child, but also gives a more authentic and dynamic research context. How the child feels and how the child emotionally relates to the researcher are important in cultural-historical research. Yet this dimension is missing from many research traditions. *Studying emotions without building an emotional relationship between the researcher and the child is absent in traditional research methods and methodologies.*

It was argued by Vygotsky (1998) that the *dramatic moments in a person's life, drama or crises, create the conditions for development. Dramatic moments can be experienced in everyday life*, such as those discussed in Chap. 6, where Angela becomes upset in the car on the way to childcare because she has forgotten to take her party hats for the birthday party planned, or as shown in Chap. 7, where Dell refuses to eat his lunch. These everyday routines of eating lunch, bath time or going to bed, can create dramatic moments which need to be resolved successfully.

Dramatic moments can also take place in educational settings, where children encounter activity settings which are frightening for them, as is discussed in Chap. 5, when Henry worries about a spider found in the outdoor area. Henry brings to the situation his own individual subjective configuration, and experiences the spider through his own subjective senses, and how the other children and the teacher engage with the spider, each other and with Henry, in turn contribute to the forming and re-forming of his subjective configuration. In using this analytical frame, it becomes possible to understand Henry's emotional imagination of the spider. Imagination in the study of emotions is also an under-researched and theorised area. In Chaps. 5 and 6 the concept of emotional imagination or affective imagination is introduced.

Transitions frequently create dramatic moments. Transition points potentially reveal drama, and this drama gives insights into the development of the child. There are many transition points in the life course of humans—transitions between institutions, such as when going from preschool to school; transitions between activity settings, such as when a preschool child is seated on a mat and must transition to another activity setting; transitions within an activity setting, such as when a young child tries to join the play of a small group of children in the park; transitions in the workplace or between age periods (Vygotsky 1998).

There are also specially engineered dramatic moments, as has been studied and theorised by Zaporozhets (2002) and El'Koninova (2002). Zaporozhets (2002) suggested that children develop "a specific emotional attitude toward their surrounding reality and people, an attitude that corresponds to the goals, moral standards, and ideals of society" (p. 45). It is through engaging in, and collectively co-experiencing "the child begins to evaluate his [sic] own actions, thus passing to the state of self-regulating behaviour" (p. 53). El'Koninova (2002) has argued that emotionally charged events are encrypted into many fairytales, and children must emotionally live through these moments if they wish to follow the hero and resolve the tension/conflict/problem scenario in the story. These dramatic moments or crises create the conditions for emotional development.

Dramatic moments were first described by Vygotsky (1998) in the context of explaining development across age periods, where he introduced the concept of crisis. Crisis or drama is a key concept in Vygotsky's work and yet few cultural-historical scholars look for dramatic moments in their data.

The development of emotions as a cultural practice in specifically engineered situations (Zaporozhets 2002) or through everyday life events, as is shown through the chapters in the middle section of this book, challenges our understandings of emotions as the internalised operations of the individual. Rather, the development

of emotions has to be conceptualised as part of a complex network within which human activities and human relationships occur. Emotions, imagination and emotional anticipation together with the concepts of perezhivanie and subjective sense and subjective configuration, capture the complex network of processes that make up the development of emotions. The dialectical relations between emotions and feelings, in which crisis, transitions or drama acts as the driving force for development, advances the study of emotions from a traditional individual conceptualisation to a cultural-historical theorisation.

1.4 Advancing the Concept of Perezhivanie

In the first section of the book the concept of perezhivanie is theorised (Chaps. 2–4). But to fully appreciate the diversity, complexity and uniqueness of this concept, it is important to draw upon the principles introduced in the introduction as analytical themes (*Overcoming social determinism; Challenging understanding of human mind as a result of internalised operations; Integrative system*), for showing the connections of perezhivanie with the concepts of subjectivity and emotions.

1.4.1 *Perezhivanie as a Unit of Social Situation of Development: Overcoming Social Determinism*

Detailed analysis of perezhivanie as a unit of analysis and how this informs concrete experimental and empirical studies is undertaken in this book (see Chaps. 2–4). However, there is something, which needs further elaboration in relation to the role of perezhivanie and overcoming social determinism.

Already in his early book of 1925 (Vygotsky 1986) Vygotsky defines the traditional distinction of the social and the individual as naïve:

It is quite naïve to understand the social only as collective, as a large number of people. The social also exists where there is only one person with his individual perezhivanie (Vygotsky 1986, p. 314).

What is remarkable is that perezhivanie appears early in Vygotsky's writings in relation to the conceptions of the social and the individual as a first attempt to look at the social and the individual not as oppositions, but as a dialectical unity. Later and also in the last stage of his work, he improved this general statement by introducing perezhivanie as a concept within cultural-historical theory:

... perezhivanie is a concept which allows us to study the role and influence of environment on the psychological development of children in the analysis of the laws of development (Vygotsky 1994, p. 343).

What is important is that *perezhivanie* is a tool (concept) for analysing the influence of the sociocultural environment, *not on the individual* per se, but *on the process* of development of the individual, which is seen as the “path along which the social becomes the individual” (Vygotsky 1998, p. 198). In other words, the environment determines the development of the individual through the individual’s *perezhivanie* of the environment (Vygotsky 1998, p. 294). This approach enlarges the developmental perspective and overcomes naïve social determinism.

More generally, by introducing the concept of *perezhivanie*, Vygotsky challenges the traditional socio-genetic approaches (social constructivism and social behaviourism, in particular), which consider development as a transformative transition from social to individual and therefore understands them as two related, but separate instances. He suggests an alternative approach, looking on the individual in a process of its development as a dialectical becoming; looking on *how* an individual *becomes* itself, creates itself as a unique subject interacting within the social environment (Veresov 2016). Cultural-historical theory considers social environment not as a combination of factors, influencing a child in certain ways, but as a source of development (Vygotsky 1998, p. 203). This might be interpreted as a step back to a separation of the social and the individual. To clarify this, it makes sense to take a look at another concept which was introduced together and in relation to the concept of *perezhivanie* in the later stages of Vygotsky’s work. This is the concept of social situation of development (SSD), as “an exclusive single and unique relation between the child and the social reality which surrounds him [sic]” (Vygotsky 1998, p. 198). The concrete social situation of development, according to Vygotsky, (1) “represents the initial moment for all dynamic changes that occur in development”, and (2) “determines wholly and completely the forms and the path along which the child will acquire ever newer personality characteristics, drawing them from the social reality as from the basic source of development” (Vygotsky 1998, p. 198). Although different understandings of the relation between the concept of *perezhivanie* and the concept of the social situation of development exist (see Chaps. 2–4, this volume), all researchers agree that the social situation of development highlights the active role of a child in the social environment and positions the child as an active participant of the social situation of development. It is the child who by creating and recreating social situations of development acquires new personality characteristics; it is a child who draws them from the social reality. The social situation does not exist outside of the child or without the child’s participation in it; it is a system of interactions, relations of the child and social environment. The social environment in general, is what surrounds the child and exists independently from a child, as an “aggregate of objective conditions existing without reference to the child and affecting him [sic] by the very fact of their existence” (Vygotsky 1998, p. 198). Social situation of development is a unity of a child and social reality, which exist as a system of relations of a child to the environment and the environment to the child.

From this it logically follows that the social situation of development is not equal with the social environment but it is a complex and dynamic unity of certain environmental (objective) aspects and characteristics and certain child’s individual (subjective) characteristics. Therefore, this unity cannot be analysed by dividing it

into parts, into social and individual, objective and subjective components without losing the properties of the whole unity. There should be a unit of analysis of a social situation of development, which allow for the analysis of this complex unity. Perezhivanie is a unit of analysis of a social situation of development:

Perezhivanie is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e. that which is being experienced - perezhivanie is always related to something which is found outside the person - and on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this, i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in perezhivanie.... (Vygotsky 1994, p. 342)

To state a certain, general, formal position it would be correct to say that the environment determines the development of the child through subjective perezhivanie of the environment

...the child is a part of the social situation, and the relation of the child to the environment and the environment to the child occurs through perezhivanie ... of the child himself; the forces of the environment acquire a controlling significance because the child experiences them (Vygotsky 1998, p. 294).

Social environment as a source of development of the individual is not something, which exists outside the individual. It exists only when the individual actively participates in this environment, by acting, interacting, interpreting, understanding, recreating and redesigning social situations of development. Social environment determines the developmental trajectory; however, child's subjectivity, an individual subjective configuration of the child is no less powerful in defining the course of her individual unique developmental trajectory than objective characteristics of social environment.

1.4.2 Challenging Understanding of Human Mind as a Result of Internalised Operations: Perezhivanie as a Refracting Prism

Another important avenue for rethinking and conceptualising development as a process of sociocultural genesis of mind, which the concept of perezhivanie is opening, is the introduction of a principle or refraction (Veresov and Fleer 2016; Chap. 3, this volume). Vygotsky defines the perezhivanie of an individual as a kind of psychological prism, which determines the role and influence of the environment on development (Vygotsky 1994, p. 341). It definitely challenges the principle of reflection (see Chap. 3, this volume), but it seems that it also allows for a different take on internalisation as a mechanism of social formation of human mind.

For Vygotskians there is no reason to doubt the importance of internalisation; however, what is interesting to mention here is that in Vygotsky's original texts we can hardly find this concept. General genetic law of cultural development which says that higher mental functions initially exist on the social plane inter-psychologically

and then become individual intra-psychological functions (Vygotsky 1997, p. 106) says nothing on internalisation; even more, “inter” here is related not to internal, but to external existence of higher mental functions. Instead, Vygotsky widely uses the Russian term *вращивание* (*vrashchivanie*) (Vygotsky 1956, p. 395; 1984a, p. 13; 1984b, p. 74), which might be translated as ingrowing, growing within from outside, something like as if roots of a tree are outside the soil and the tree grows into the soil. This, of course, corresponds with the idea that the development goes from social (roots of development are outside the individual) to individual (fruits of development are individual psychological processes). Even though we begin to use the term “*vrashchivanie*” instead of “internalisation” the problem remains—what is the essence of *vrashchivanie*. It seems the concept of *perezhivanie* allows us to open up a new perspective for deeper understanding.

It is important to make a note that the principle of refraction was introduced by Vygotsky at the last stage of his work and it remains undeveloped. What is also important is that it was introduced not in relation to *perezhivanie* only. For example, in another work of the same period, Vygotsky says that:

An action reflected¹ through the prism of thought has already been transformed into a different action, one that is meaningful, conscious, and consequently free and voluntary; that is, it stands in a different general relationship to the situation from action which is directly conditioned by the situation and which has not gone through the direct and reverse transformation of dynamics (Vygotsky 1993, p. 235).

This might help us to develop our understanding of a principle of refraction in general and *perezhivanie* as a refracting prism in particular. It shows refraction through thought as a mechanism of liberation of a subject from directly conditioned stimuli. On the other hand, it relates to a subject, his/her subjectivity as a unique configuration of individual functions being able to master and control direct and reverse transformations of actions and thoughts.

This, in turn, might support a deeper analysis of *perezhivanie* as a *subjective* refracting prism. The social becomes the individual, but the dialectics of this becoming is that only those components of the social environment that are refracted by the subjective *perezhivanie* of the individual achieve developmental significance (Vygotsky 1998, p. 294). Therefore, the same social situation might be (or should be) experienced by different children differently depending on which components and how they were subjectively refracted. Vygotsky’s famous example of three children from the same family which shows that the same social environment, being differently refracted through *perezhivanie* of three different children, brought three different developmental outcomes and individual developmental trajectories (Vygotsky 1994, pp. 339–340), might be reinterpreted in terms of child’s individual subjective configuration.

In summary, the concept of *perezhivanie* definitely needs further theoretical and empirical investigation. One possible and promising way of doing this is to discover

¹Refracted (*преломленное*) is the word in Russian original text (Vygotsky 1983, p. 250).

this concept in relation to subjectivity and emotions. This chapter is the first step on this theoretical journey.

1.5 Conclusion

In analysing the studies and historical works presented in the chapters of this book, and in bringing this analysis to the wider literature, it is possible to advance the concepts of emotions, perezhivanie and subjectivity through the principles of:

1. *Overcoming social determinism;*
2. *Challenging understanding of human mind as a result of internalised operations;*
3. *An integrative system.*

The chapters that follow give elaborations of the theoretical insights advanced here, as well as empirical examples to illustrate these key principles. These principles advance understandings in cultural-historical theory and together with the content of this book, give new directions for research and theoretical discussions. The final chapter in the book puts into dialogue the cultural-historical concepts of emotions, perezhivanie and subjectivity between the three editors. Taken together, this chapter and the final chapter make a contribution to advancing understandings about what is unique for researching and conceptualising emotions, perezhivanie and subjectivity from a cultural-historical perspective.

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