http://journal.unoeste.br/index.php/ch
DOI: 10.5747/ch.2019.v16.n2.h418
ISSN on-line 1809-8207

Colloquium Humanarum

Submetido: 26/05/2019 Correções: 23/06/2019 Aceite final: 24/06/2019

DIALECTICS OF THE CONCRETE AND HISTORICAL-CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN BRAZIL[1]

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ABSTRACT
Educational studies in Brazil have a strong tradition based on Marxist dialectical thinkers as Gramsci, Lukács and Kosik. One of the most significant Marxist approaches in the field of pedagogical theories in Brazil is called Historical-Critical Pedagogy. The non-critical educational approaches defends an almost immediate identification of the school contents and methods with the pragmatic needs emerged in everyday practices and this perspective ignores the dialectics phenomena-essence and takes the pseudo-concrete as the real concrete. Historical-Critical Pedagogy takes the opposite direction and understands that the way to engage school education in a transformative social praxis is to organize the school curriculum in order to provide the conceptual tools required to take the "detour" that Kosik, based on Marx, considered necessary for human beings to grasp the essence of social reality. This paper will be an attempt to explore the points of intersection between Dialectics of Concrete and Historical-Critical Pedagogy.
Keywords: Karel Kosik. Dermeval Saviani. Dialectics of Concrete. Historical-Critical Pedagogy.

DIALÉTICA DO CONCRETO E PEDAGOGIA HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICA NO BRASIL

RESUMO
Estudos educacionais no Brasil têm uma forte tradição baseada em pensadores dialéticos marxistas como Gramsci, Lukács e Kosik. Uma das mais significativas abordagens marxistas no campo das teorias pedagógicas no Brasil é chamada de Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica. As abordagens educacionais não críticas defendem uma identificação quase imediata dos conteúdos e métodos escolares com as necessidades pragmáticas geradas por práticas da vida cotidiana e esse tipo de perspectiva ignora a dialética fenômeno-essência e toma o pseudoconcreto como se fosse o concreto real. A pedagogia histórico-crítica toma a direção oposta e entende que o caminho para se engajar a educação escolar numa práxis social transformadora é organizar o currículo escolar de maneira a fornecer as ferramentas conceituais necessárias para se realizar o "détour" ou "desvio" que Kosik, baseado em Marx, considera necessário para que os seres humanos se apropriem da essência da realidade social. Este artigo é uma tentativa de exploração dos pontos de intersecção entre a dialética do concreto e a pedagogia histórico-crítica.
Palavras-chave: Karel Kosik. Dermeval Saviani. Dialética do Concreto. Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica.

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RESUMEN
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[1] A shorter version of this paper was presented in the Conference "Karel Kosik and Dialectics of Concrete", Prague, June 4-6, 2014.

teorías pedagógicas en Brasil es llamada Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica. Los enfoques educativos no críticos defienden una identificación casi inmediata de los contenidos y métodos escolares con las necesidades pragmáticas generadas por prácticas de la vida cotidiana y ese tipo de perspectiva ignora la dialéctica fenomeno-esencia y toma el pseudoconcreto como si fuera el concreto real. La pedagogía histórico-crítica toma la dirección opuesta y entiende que el camino para involucrar la educación escolar en una praxis social transformadora es organizar el currículo escolar de manera a proporcionar las herramientas conceptuales necesarias para realizar el "détour" o "desvío" que Kosik , basado en Marx, considera necesario para que los seres humanos se apropien de la esencia de la realidad social. Este artículo es un intento de exploración de los puntos de intersección entre la dialéctica del concreto y la pedagogía histórico-crítica.
Palabras clave: Karel Kosik. Dermeval Saviani. Dialéctica del Concreto. Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica.

There are many aspects in Dialectics of Concrete that can be explored for Marxist educators. Here I will try to explore the importance of philosophy, art and science to the process of knowing the essence of reality. Kosik (1976) makes a distinction between ideas and concepts not just as two forms and degrees of knowledge but also as two forms of práxis: one is the everyday práxis of individuals and the other is the revolutionary práxis of humankind. Kosik explains the relation between everyday práxis and the everyday way of thinking:

> People use money and carry out the most complicated transactions with it without ever knowing, or having to know, what money is. Immediate utilitarian praxis and corresponding routine thinking thus allow to find their way about in the world, to feel familiar with things and to manipulate them, but it does not provide them with a *comprehension* of things and of reality. That is why Marx could have written that agents of social conditions feel at ease, as fish do in water, in the world of phenomenal forms that are alienated from their internal connections and were in such isolation absolutely senseless (KOSIK, 1976, p. 1-2).

This everyday way of thinking is a necessary component of a historically and socially particular form of práxis:

> The praxis we are talking about here is the historically determined one-sided and fragmentary praxis of individuals, based on the division of labor, the class differentiation of society and the resulting hierarchy of social status. What is formed in this praxis is both a particular material environment of the historical individual and the spiritual atmosphere in which the superficial shape of reality comes to be fixed as the world of fictitious intimacy, familiarity and confidence within which man moves about “naturally” and within which he has his dealing (KOSIK, 1976, p. 2).

The *millieu* constituted by this kind of everyday practice and thinking is called by Kosik as *the pseudoconcrete* and described by him as the world of external phenomena, the fetishisized praxis which is the opposite of a revolutionary-critical praxis, the routine ideas, the fixed objects that appears as natural conditions and not as products of human social relations and activities.

As Kosik explains, the phenomenon is part of the same reality as the essence. They are not two separated realities. The phenomenon reveals and covers the essence. In order to know

the essence is necessary to go beyond the superficial and immediate appearance of reality with which people are in direct contact in their everyday life. It is necessary a *detour.* Kosik explains that the essence "does not manifest itself to us directly" and it is necessary a specific activity in order to know the essence. This kind of specific activity has been developed by humankind as the social spheres of science, art and philosophy. It is not the fact that everyday practice works with the world of phenomena that generates the pseudoconcrete. The pseudoconcrete is an alienated relation with phenomena in consequence of an equally alienated everyday life. The developing of a dialectical way of thinking and knowing is to fight not against phenomena but against its alienated forms. As Kosik wrotes:

> Such thinking, which abolishes the pseudoconcrete in order to reach the concrete, is also a process that exposes a real world under the world of appearences, the law of the phenomenon behind the appearance of the phenomenon, real internal movement behind the visible movement, the essence behind the phenomenon. What lends these phenomena a pseudoconcrete character is not their existence as such but the apparent autonomy of their existence. In destroying the pseudoconcrete, dialectical thinking does not deny the existence or the objective character of these phenomena, but rather abolishes their fictitious independence by demonstrating their mediatedness, and counters their claim to autonomy proving their derivative character (KOSIK, 1976, p. 6).

This dialectical path to the real concrete by the mediation of the abstractions is clearly based on the Marxian propositions on the method of political economy. Marx (1973) begins his analysis by showing us that, in the field of science, which in this case is represented by political economy, when one studies one reality, for instance, a country, apparently the most correct approach would be starting from concrete reality. Nevertheless, he proves this is an erroneous method, for thought cannot apprehend concrete reality in an immediate way, and cannot reproduce it through direct contact. This direct contact produces in our thinking a "chaotic conception of the whole", which cannot be considered an effective apprehension of reality. Marx exposes this question in the following words:

> When we consider a given country politico-economically, we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, commodity prices etc.
>
> It seems to be correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labor, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labor, prices, etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage labor, without value, money, price etc. Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [Vorstellung] of the whole, and I would

> then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [Begriff], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations (MARX, 1973 , p. 100).

What does he mean with the statement: "the population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed"? Let us not forget that Marx refers to the economic analysis of a country. In this case, if one takes the population as a starting point, i.e., the population in a general sense, when the only common trait belonging to all this population is the fact that they are part of the same country, if one does not take it into account that it is not a homogeneous population, that it is composed by social classes, then there will be little or perhaps nothing to say about its social reality. The term "abstraction" is used, in this case, as a synonym of an idea that does not correspond to the complexity of the content of reality. For this reason, starting by the population implies departing from a "chaotic conception of the whole". If this initial representation is not capable of translating adequately this wholeness, it becomes necessary to shift to analysis: because the population is formed by social classes, it is imperative to analyze them; however, this only becomes possible if one analyzes wage labor and capital; capital, on its turn, can only be understood adequately through the analysis of its opposite, i.e., wage labor, and the relationship between both is mediated by value, i.e., by exchange-value, that, together with use-value composes commodity; on its turn, the exchange between commodities is mediated, in market, by the general equivalent of commodity value, which is money, by which the price of commodities is established. Taking population to begin with (by a chaotic conception of the whole), one has realized the need of analyzing social classes and this kind of analysis has led, through successive decomposition, through ever subtler abstractions ("ever thinner"), to simpler categories, to ever simpler determinations, i.e., to the value that mediates commodity exchange and mediates the sale of work force.

Thought does not stop scanning at this point, though. It will now have to run the inverse way, which means ascending from simpler abstraction to the complexity of the whole first represented in a chaotic way. The analytical work with the simplest and most abstract categories will follow now the journey of the progressive enriching of the reality interpretative theory, until it finally attains the whole which was at the starting point, though this whole does not present itself to thinking as a chaotic conception any longer, but as "a rich totality of many determinations and relations", instead.

Concreteness is, thus, reproduced by scientific thought, which reconstructs, in the intellectual plan, the complexity of relations forming the scope of reality inherent in the research object. Nowadays, such considerations made by Marx are of extreme importance to human sciences, if we consider that many researchers reject the totality perspective, remaining restricted to the isolated case, to the particular case considered by itself. Such researchers guarantee that they adopt this attitude aiming to recover the richness of the particular case, which would be destroyed by means of every perspective that search envisaging totality. Sometimes, those researchers do not actually deny the necessity of the apprehension of the whole, but such apprehension is postponed for future studies that may still one day be developed. It sounds as if it were possible, by some kind of witchery, to produce an articulated view of the whole on the basis of microscopic, fragmentary studies. Once the approach inherent in research concerning particular cases in themselves is carried out by a chaotic conception of the whole, it will never be able to accomplish its aim, i.e., the apprehension of each specific particular situation, because such a richness can only be really known when the particular, specific situation is visualized as a part of the relations pertaining to the totality.

Marx (1973) goes on stating that the first route (from chaotic conception to simpler abstractions) was exactly the one historically assumed by economic studies at the origin of this

science, but he realizes this is not the course traversed by scientific thought in the process of elaboration of a scientific explanation, i.e., a theoretical analysis of reality. This one only becomes possible by means of the inverse route, i.e., and the one that scans from abstractions to the construction of concrete in thinking. Marx affirms this "is manifestly the correct scientific method", i.e., the concrete can only be adequately apprehended by thought, not as a starting point, but, instead, as a result, a synthesis:

> The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [Anschauung] and conception. Along the first path the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second, the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought. In this way Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind. But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being. For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, moreover a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc. It can never exist other than as an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole (MARX, 1973, p. 101).

In Kosik's terms, the "destruction of pseudo-concrete" is not aimed just by the scientific thought but, also, by art and philosophy. He gives an exemplum of how art can challenge some representations of reality build in everyday practices and social relations:

> The patricians of Amsterdam are reported to have angrily rejected Rembrandt's "Night Watch" (1642) in which they did not recognize themselves and which impressed them as distorting reality. Is reality truthfully known only when one recognizes oneself in it? This suggestion would assume that man knows himself, knows what he looks like and who he is, that he knows reality and can tell what reality is, independently of art and philosophy. But from where does man know all this, and from where comes the certainty that what he knows is indeed reality itself and not merely his idea of it? The patricians defended their idea of reality against the reality of Rembrandt's work and thus equated their prejudices with reality. They believed reality was contained in their ideas and thus that their ideas were reality. It followed logically that an artistic expression of reality should translate their ideas into the

> language of sensory artistic painting. Reality was known and the artist should only depict and illustrate it. But a work of art does not depict ideas of reality. As work and as art, it both depict reality and forms it, simultaneously and inseparably: the reality of beauty and art. (KOSIK, 1976, p. 71-72).

The non-critical educational approaches have been defending an almost immediate identification of the school contents and methods with the pragmatic needs emerged in everyday practices. This perspective ignores the dialectics phenomena-essence and identifies the pseudoconcrete with the real concrete. In the same way, this kind of pedagogies ignores the alienation produced by the capitalist society. In the opposite direction, the materialistic historical dialectical perspective in philosophy has been assumed as reference for a Brazilian Marxist pedagogical approach named Historical-Critical Pedagogy[2]. This pedagogy has started in the late 1970s from studies conducted by Dermeval Saviani based on the contributions of many Marxist authors for a critical and dialectical approach of school education.

Since my doctoral dissertation in education, concluded in 1992 and published as a book in Brazil in the following year (DUARTE, 1993), I have been conducting studies in the fields of Psychology and Philosophy of Education with the aim to make contributions to the development of the Historical-Critical Pedagogy in Brazil.

The distinctive trait of Historical-Critical Pedagogy is the premise which, despite the fact that school education does not have the power to revolutionise the society, there is a particular way in which the work inside the schools can make an important contribution to the overcoming of capitalism: the socialization of the most developed and richest knowledge. This pedagogy understands the socialization of this kind of knowledge as part of the struggle for the socialization of the means of production.

Saviani (2008, p. 09) defines three tasks to be fulfilled by the Historical-Critical Pedagogy related to the socialization of knowledge by school education. The first task is to identify the most historically developed forms of knowledge and to understand its main manifestations. Taking into account that all forms of knowledge express a moment of the entire process of appropriation of reality by human social practice, it is necessary to recognize the conditions of knowledge production and the present tendencies of its transformation. The second task is to transform these developed forms of knowledge into school knowledge enabling its appropriation by students in the school space and time. Finally, the third task is to provide the school education with the means to achieve successful teaching and learning. The appropriation of knowledge by the students is the appropriation of a product of the social practice and at the same time the appropriation of the conditions of the production and the transformation of this knowledge. As Kosik wrote:

> Dialectics does not consider fixed artifacts, formations an objects, the entire complex of both the material world of things and that of ideas and of the routine thinking, to be something original and autonomous. It does not accept them in their ready made form, but subjects them to investigation in which the reified forms of the objective and the ideal worlds dissolve, lose their fixed and natural character and their fictitious originality, and show up as derivative and mediated phenomena, as sediments and artifacts of the social praxis of mankind (KOSIK, 1976, p. 6).

The school contents are not just dead and ready made things. They are condensed social practice and by means the teaching of those contents school education does much more than just repeat information. It is a complex process of formation of a way to understand the natural and social reality beyond the immediateness of pseudoconcrete.

[2] I tried to make a brief introduction in English to my discussion about this issue in Duarte (2006).

An objection to these statements could be formulated based on the well-known distinction between education and instruction. According to which, a critical pedagogy would not be "naively" concerned with the teaching and the learning of school contents; instead, it would be engaged in the process of education understood as the formation of critical consciousness. This objection is based on the assumption that learning Languages, Literature, Maths, Natural and Social Sciences, Arts and Philosophy at school does not have any impact on what people think and how they think about life, society and values. In this sense, the ways individuals see the world would not change as a result of school instruction. This conception separates and opposes instruction and education.

Instruction could be not an educative process only if knowledge was something apart from human practice. But the reality is the opposite. As Kosik explains, even the knowledge on natural reality is a product of the social and cultural human practice:

> Man has formed himself on basis of work, in work and through work, not only as a thinking being, qualitatively different from all other higher animals, but also as the only being in the universe we know of capable of forming reality. Man is a component of nature and is himself nature. At the same time, though, he is a being which, having mastered both "external" and his own natures, forms a new reality in nature, one that is irreducible to the later. The world that man constructs as a socio-human reality stems from conditions independent of man, and is unthinkable without them. Yet it represents a different quality, irreducible to these conditions. Man stems from nature and is a part of it even as he transcends it. He relates freely to his creations, steps away from them, questions their meaning and questions his own place in the universe. He is not closed within himself and his world. Because he forms a human world, an objective social reality, and thus is able to transcend its situation, conditions and assumptions, man grasps and interprets the extra-human world as well, the universe and nature. Man can penetrate the mysteries of nature only because he forms a human reality (KOSIK, 1976, p. 71).

In this way, the work with scientific, artistic and philosophic knowledge within school education is not only a mere transference of information from the books or from the mind of the teachers to the mind of the students. It is an essentially educative process.

One of the best rebuttals of the separation between instruction and education is found in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. He asserts that if instruction was totally disconnected from education the student would be "pure passivity, a mechanical receiver of abstract notions" (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 179). On one hand, the active pedagogies criticise mechanistic instruction because it does not respect the essentially active nature of human beings but, on the other hand, the same pedagogies implicitly accept the notion of a totally passive student that could learn school contents in the same way that an empty bottle receives a liquid.

But even more important is how Gramsci sustains his position analysing one of the most criticized examples of traditional school. There are some typical examples of mechanistic instruction in traditional education as the teaching of multiplication tables or names of geographic places and historical people and dates. But perhaps the one considered the most representative example of the meaningless mechanistic traditional education is the teaching of Latin Grammar. It is exactly this example that Gramsci uses to demonstrate how wrong the exaggerated distinction between instruction and education is. He contextualises the whole proposal of the traditional education in Italy. The grammatical study of Latin and Greek was

necessary to the study of the classical Roman and Greek authors who symbolise the humanistic ideal that was "an essential element of national life and culture" (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 182). The justification of the learning of Greek and Latin was not pragmatic; people did not learn these languages in order to solve problems in everyday life. Gramsci says: "the end seemed disinterested, because the real interest was the interior development of personality, the formation of character by means of the absorption and assimilation of the whole cultural past of modern European civilisation" (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 182). At the same time, the assimilation of this culture was a process of recognition of the origins and the foundations of the modern civilization: "in other words, they learnt them in order to be themselves and know themselves consciously" (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 182).

Gramsci explains how this process was educative from two points of view. The first was the formation of a historical perspective. The student

> (…) has plunged into history and acquired a historicising understanding of the world and of life, which becomes a second—nearly spontaneous—nature, since it is not inculcated pedantically with an openly educational intention. These studies educated without an explicitly declared aim of doing so, with a minimal "educative" intervention on the part of the teacher: they educated because they gave instruction (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 185).

The second point of view from which Gramsci considers educative the teaching of Latin and Greek at traditional school was the formation of attitudes, habits, methods and the discipline that are necessary to the activity of studying. His position against the facilitation of school learning is very clear: "studying too is a job, and a very tiring one, with its own particular apprenticeship – involving muscles and nerves as well as the intellect" and "it is a process of adaptation, a habit acquired with effort, tedium and even suffering" (GRAMSCI, 1999, p. 189).

So, the socialization of science, art and philosophy by school education is not just a mechanical transference of information from one person to another but a whole transformation of the way we see the world and ourselves, which translate into the development of our world-view (*Weltanschauung*) and our personality. The appropriation of cultural products is not something disconnected from human activity because there is a connection between the products and praxis as explains Kosik:

> There is a direct connection between work as creating and the elevating creations of work: creations point at their creator – man – who stands above them, and testify not only to what he has become and has achieved but to all that he can yet be. They annunciate his actual creativity but even more so his infinite potentialities (KOSIK, 1976, p. 68).

The relations between school and life, instruction and education are not direct. When we try to connect directly school education and everyday life, we fail to organize an education that allows the appropriation by the students of the intellectual tools that are necessary to go beyond the superficial appearance of reality.

I have been defending for more than two decades the thesis that school education has to produce in the new generations the necessity of kinds of knowledge normally not demanded by the everyday experience, like science, art and philosophy. This thesis goes directly against the educational theories in which a good school education must be the one orientated by the necessities spontaneously emerged in the students' everyday lives. The aim of school education should not be to satisfy the immediate and pragmatic necessities emerged in everyday life. The reason for this is not because those everyday necessities are not real, they are real indeed, even when they are alienated. But alienated or not, the everyday necessities are limited by the pragmatism and immediatism prevailing in everyday activities.

When I disagree with the attempt to see education merely as a means of the solution to

immediate problems within everyday life, it is not my intention to sustain the idea that school education should be an aseptic environment in both political and ethical senses. The neutrality of education is neither possible nor desirable. The individuals, in order to master the connections between their everyday lives and the social process as a whole, need to incorporate to their intra-subjectivity the superior forms of thoughts and feelings embodied in the works of science, art and philosophy.

What is the function of the transmission of scientific, artistic and philosophical knowledge within education? In search for answers to this essential question and also in search of support for a materialistic dialectical historical approach of the role of culture in education, I conducted a study of Georg Lukács' works on aesthetics and Lev Vygotsky's works on psychology of art. It was not my intention to develop an original interpretation of the conceptions of these two authors on art. I intended to explore the fruitfulness of these works as contributions to a theory of education. However, I do not consider art more important for education than science or philosophy and, also, I do not intend to aestheticize the educational theory or practice.

Because education, particularly schooling, has its own specificities, an educational theory cannot be deduced directly from aesthetic analysis. On the other hand, if we take necessary precautions to avoid direct and simplistic identifications, the comprehension of relations between individuals and art within the creative and receptive artistic process can provide theoretical tools to the analysis of the developing of human nature as a cultural and historical process.

In *Psychology of Art,* Vygotsky (1971) discusses the relations between art and everyday life when criticizing the theory according to which the effect of a work of art would be merely to infect people with the feelings of the artist. According to this psychologist, if such contamination theory were correct, art would produce only a propagation of the individual's feelings, without any transformation in those feelings. In order to illustrate how poor the social significance of art would be if the contamination theory were correct, Vygotsky makes an analogy with a biblical story, the multiplication of loaves and fishes:

> This miracle is only quantitative: thousands were fed and satisfied, but each of them ate only fish and bread. But was this not their daily diet at home, without any miracles? If the only purpose of a tragic poem were to infect us with the author's sorrow, this would be a very sad situation indeed for art (VYGOTSKY, 1971, p. 243).

Vygotsky does not agree with this point of view about the meaning of art. Instead of the spreading through the society of what the individual feels in their everyday life, the process performed by the work of art is the producing of the appropriation by the individuals of socially developed forms of feeling.

In works which were produced some years later than *Psychology of Art*, as such *Thinking and Speech,* Vygotsky (1987) asserted that the school learning of the scientific concepts produces a great transformation in the spontaneous concepts which the child forms in their everyday life. On the other hand, without the basis formed by the child's spontaneous concepts, the development of scientific concepts would not be possible. The scientific concepts incorporate the spontaneous ones and, at the same time, transform and transcend them.

In a similar way, art initiates, in individuals, a process of transcending everyday forms of emotional reactions and at the same time incorporating as well as elevating them to a higher level. For Vygotsky, art utilizes material reproduced from everyday life, but gives to it a different configuration that produces, in individuals, feelings that are not normally experienced in everyday life. Here he makes, once more, an analogy with a biblical story. This time is the miracle of transformation of water into wine.

> (…) the fear, pain or excitement caused by art includes something above and beyond its normal, conventional content. This "something" overcomes feelings of fear and pain, changes water into wine, and thus fulfils the most important purpose of art. One of the great thinkers said once that art relates

> to life as wine relates to the grape. With this he meant to say that art takes its material from life, but gives in return something which its material did not contain (VYGOTSKY, 1971, p. 243).

In *The Peculiarity of the Aesthetic*[3]*,* Georg Lukács analyses the relations between art and everyday life, in the historical perspective of the genesis of all spheres of human activity. The primordial form of human activity was the production of the means to satisfy the human needs. Throughout a long process, other forms of human activities emerged from that first and fundamental one. During this long historical process, different spheres of objectification of humankind became, little by little, relatively autonomous. In this perspective, everyday life is the sphere in which the human being develops themselves spontaneously or, in a Hegelian term, as a species-being "in itself". On the other hand, spheres like philosophy, science, and art are at the level of species-being "for itself". Lukács (1966a, p. 11-12) compares the everyday life with a great river from which science and art initiated their process of differentiation in superior forms of mental appropriation of reality. Art and science develop their peculiarity and their own specific purposes, problems and methods historically. However, the effects of art and science return to the everyday life, sometimes by means of a very long and complex chain of mediations.

> As a consequence of their effects and their influence on the life of human beings, science and art discharge in the flow of everyday life once again. Such everyday life is constantly enriched by the supreme results of the human spirit, by assimilating them to its practical everyday necessities and thus giving place, as issues and as requirements, to new ramifications of the superior forms of objectification (LUKÁCS, 1966a, p. 11-12).

According to Lukács, the contribution of art to this process of development of the species-being "for itself" would be the elevation of subjectivity to a higher level, in which the personality is objectified as a synthesis between the unique and the universal and between the subjective and the objective.

For Vygotsky, as well as for Lukács, it is necessary to understand the peculiarity of art compared with other forms of human objectification, in order to overcome two conceptions that are equally one-sided and mistaken. In one extreme, there is an assertion of the purely disinterested character of art ("the art for its own sake") and, in the other extreme, the creation and the reception of the work of art are subordinated to the service of some immediate practical purpose.

This false choice between disinterested or pragmatic learning has been spreading out within pedagogical thinking. This false choice is based on the identification of pseudoconcrete and concrete. In order to connect the school contents and methods with human social practice it is necessary the detour. But the detour is not an easy path. As Kosik explains: "Precisely because this detour is the only negotiable path to truth, every now and then will mankind attempt to spare itself the trouble of the long journey and seek to intuit the essence of things directly (mysticism is man's impatience in the search of truth" (KOSIK, 1976, p. 9). For Historical-Critical Pedagogy one of the most important challenges for school education nowadays is to teach and to learn how to make that detour necessary to fight against alienation.

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[3] Unfortunately, there is no English translation of the Lukács' book *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* originally published in German in two volumes (LUKÁCS, 1963). Here I use a Spanish edition published in four volumes (LUKÁCS, 1966a, 1966b, 1967a, 1967b). The most detailed study of the aesthetic thought of Lukács in English that I know of is a book written by Bela Kiralyfalvi (1975).

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